

**EVOLUTION OF  
VĪRĀŚĀIVA CONCEPTS  
PART I**

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## Depiction of Sanskrit and Kannaḍa Words

Most of the articles written in English, and published in this book, have many Saṃskṛta (Sanskrit) and Kannaḍa words that are written using the English alphabet. Transliteration of these words for proper pronunciation is a challenge with only about half the number of letters in the English alphabet. Furthermore, in general, the sounds of the English letters f, q, w, x and z, are not usable in both Sanskrit and Kannaḍa, leaving even a lesser number of English letters for the depiction. Each letter/syllable of the Sanskrit and Kannaḍa alphabets has only one pronunciation, and the alphabet is arranged according to the functional structure of the mouth to produce these sounds. There are no capital letters; all the letters are in one case only. The following is the English representation of the letters of the Kannaḍa alphabet and the corresponding Dēvanāgarī script of Sanskrit that are in common use nowadays. The lines, dots and other marks used here are called 'diacritics' or 'diacritical marks'. The diacritics are combined with English letters to represent new sounds. This representation is slightly modified from the scheme of transliteration given in ŚŪNYASAMPĀDANE Volumes I through V, published by Karnatak University, Dharwar, India.

**Vowels:** The vowels are either of a short or of a long duration. The sound of short vowels is held for one count, and that of long vowels is held for two counts. The sound of complex vowels is held for two counts.

Short vowels	Long vowels	Complex vowels
ಅ/ಆ/ a	ಆ/आ/ ā	
ಇ/इ/ i	ಈ/ई/ ī	
ಉ/उ/ u	ಉ/ऊ/ ū	
ಋ/ऋ/ ṛ	ಋ/ऋ/ ṛ	
ಎ/ e	ಎ/ए/ ē	ಐ/ऐ/ ai
ಒ/ o	ಓ/ओ/ ō	ಔ/औ/ au

Anusvāra (Nasalization):

ಅಂ/अं/ aṃ (also aṅ)

Visarga (Aspiration):

ಅಃ/अः/ aḥ

**Consonants:** Five sets of five each of the twenty-five consonants are arranged according to five points of articulation with the first vowel 'a' added for pronunciation.

Velars or gutturals - the sound is produced in the throat or back of the mouth:

ಕ/क/ ka, ಖ/ख/ kha, ಗ/ग/ ga, ಘ/घ/ gha, ಙ/ङ/ ṅa

Palatals – the sound is produced with the tongue touching the palate (roof of the mouth):

ಚ/ಚ/ **ĉa**, ಛ/ಛ/ **ĉha**, ಜ/ಜ/ **ja**, ಝ/ಝ/ **jha**, ಞ/ಞ/ **ña**

Retroflex or cerebrals – the sound is produced with the tongue bent backwards:

ಠ/ಠ/ **ṭa**, ಠ್ಠ/ಠ್ಠ/ **ṭha**, ಡ/ಡ/ **ḍa**, ಡ್ಢ/ಡ್ಢ/ **ḍha**, ಣ/ಣ/ **ṇa**

Dentals – the sound is produced with the tongue touching the back of the upper teeth:

ತ/ತ/ **ta**, ಥ/ಥ/ **tha**, ದ/ದ/ **da**, ಧ/ಧ/ **dha**, ನ/ನ/ **na**

Labials – the sound is produced at the lips:

ಪ/ಪ/ **pa**, ಫ/ಫ/ **pha**, ಬ/ಬ/ **ba**, ಭ/ಭ/ **bha**, ಮ/ಮ/ **ma**

Semi-vowels: ಯ/ಯ/ **ya**, ರ/ರ/ **ra**, ಲ/ಲ/ **la**, ವ/ವ/ **va**

Palatal sibilant: ಶ/ಶ/ **śa** Retroflex sibilant: ಷ/ಷ/ **ṣa** Dental sibilant: ಸ/ಸ/ **sa**

Aspirate: ಹ/ಹ/ **ha** Lateral: ಳ/ಲ/ **la**

Conjunct (combination of two letters): ಕ್ಷ/ಕ್ಷ/ **kṣa**, ಜ್ಞ/ಜ್ಞ/ **jña**

If the diacritical marks cannot be used for some reason, then there are a few accepted ways of representing some of the sounds/letters: aa for ā, ee for ī, oo for ū, and sha for the retroflex ṣa. In this version the palatal śa, as in Śiva, seems to have been written both ways – sa and sha.

It is not too difficult to use this type of representation in the articles. Although it takes more effort to properly depict the Saṃskṛta and Kannaḍa words, it is worthwhile to use the diacritical marks so that the words are sounded properly.

## Introduction

Vīraśaivism owes its present form to Basava who is popularly known as Basavaṅṅa and respectfully known as Basavēśvara. In the twelfth century of Common Era (CE/AD) there was a great religious movement in the form of revitalization and reformation of the then existing Vīraśaiva, Śaiva, and other Hindu sects, resulting in the new religious faction called Vīraśaiva or Liṅgāyata. This occurred in Karnāṭaka, India, and spread all over the world. The great leader of this movement was Basavaṅṅa. He was the Prime Minister of the king Bijjala who ruled from the capital city of Kalyāṅṅa, over a large territory of the present day Karnāṭaka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra states in India. Basavaṅṅa founded an assembly hall called Anubhava Maṅṅapa where discourses about religion and society were held. Scholars from all over India were attracted to this place, and one among them was Allama Prabhu, popularly known as Prabhudēva. He was regarded as the most intellectual Vīraśaiva scholar of the time, and he became the leader presiding over the deliberations in the Anubhava Maṅṅapa. A new Philosophical System was developed, and with accurate interpretation, practical implementation of the idea was carried out.

Vīraśaiva philosophy and practices existed prior to Basavaṅṅa's reformation of Vīraśaivism. Definition of the term Vīraśaiva, and the then existing philosophy and practices of Vīraśaivas, have been documented in the Uttara-bhāga or later-version of the Śivāgamas, and also later on in the Siddhānta Śikhāmaṅi. Both these scriptures are in the Sanskrit language. With the reformation of Vīraśaivism by Basavaṅṅa, the philosophy and practices of the Vīraśaivas have been reiterated in a modified form in the vaṅanas. These vaṅanas are in the Kannaṅa language, the language of the local people of Karnāṅṅaka, India. The vaṅanas have been compiled into the form of the main scripture of the Vīraśaivas known as 'Śūnya Sāmpādane'. It was composed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Moreover there is a long prehistory of the evolution of Vīraśaivism. Philosophical thoughts and religious practices of Vīraśaivism are traceable to, as far back as, the Ṛgvēdic period. Most scholars now agree that the beginning of this Ṛgvēdic period was around 10,000 Before Common Era (BCE/BC). Ṛgvēda was fashioned along with the old Vēdic Sāmskrṅta, the Vēdic Sanskrit language. Sanskrit language and the Vēdas were Indigenous to ancient India; there was never an Aryan invasion of India. The Theory of Aryan Invasion of India has been proven to be wrong. Furthermore, there were no Aryans or Dravidians; they were all 'Āryas'. The ancient people of India called themselves Āryas. The Hindu religion and all its subsidiaries including Vīraśaivism, and also Jainism and Buddhism, evolved from this Ārya culture.

It seems prudent to review the timing of the composition of the sacred Hindu scriptures, and then describe the Vīraśaiva concepts in relation to these scriptures in order to better understand the ancient nature of the concepts of Vīraśaivas.

## Timing of the Sacred Hindu Scriptures

The sacred Hindu scriptures are placed into two main categories – śruti and smṛti - and one subsidiary category. Śruti scriptures consist of the saṁhitā parts of the four Vēdas, namely, Ṛgvēda, Yajurvēda, Sāmavēda, and Atharvavēda, and their appendages, namely, Brāhmaṇas comprising of ritual texts, Āraṇyakas comprising of ritual and meditational texts for forest dwelling ascetics, and Upaniṣads comprising of the esoteric texts (2). Śrutis are the most sacred Hindu scriptures.

**Vēdic Period:** Ṛgvēda in ancient Sanskrit, previously a purely oral literature, is the most ancient of all compositions of the revelations. The beginning of this Ṛgvēdic period is generally considered to be around 10,000 Before Common Era (BCE) (2). According to the archeological record, there is an unbroken tradition going back to 8,000 BCE. And Ṛgvēda, a compilation of very ancient material, has astronomical references recalling events in the third to the fifth millennia BCE and earlier, indicating that the Ṛgvēda period had been well established during that period prior to 3,100 BCE (3). The ancient Indic civilization reached its maturity by 2,700 BCE. It was the golden age of the Vēdas when the Vēdic religious practice was in vogue. The practice was based on all the Vēdas; composition of the main parts of the four Vēdas being completed by then with some of the appendages added at a later date.

**Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas:** The Ṛgvēda speaks of, and praises the mighty river Sarasvati, the largest of the seven rivers forming the life support of the Vēdic civilization. Originally the Sarasvati flowed through present day Rajasthan, India, and poured itself into the Gulf of Kuch near Kathilawar Peninsula. One of the main tributaries was the Yamuna River which now flows into Gaṅga (Ganges) River. Around 1,900 BCE, over a comparatively short period of time, major tectonic shifts occurred which drastically altered the flow of rivers and turned the Sarasvati region into inhospitable desert – the present day Thar Desert in India. Prior to the final demise, the Sarasvati River had shifted its course at least four times, gradually turning the region inhospitable. Some older Brāhmaṇas mention the Sarasvati River in them; this indicates that those Brāhmaṇas were composed prior to the demise of the Sarasvati River. Śatapatha (Hundred Paths) Brāhmaṇa of the Śukla/white Yajurvēda, the biggest of all the Brāhmaṇas, vividly describes the conquest of the swampy area east of the Gaṅga River, and does not mention the drying up of the Sarasvati River. This indicates that the eastward migration of the Vēdic people occurred over several hundred years prior to the catastrophe of 1,900 BCE and that the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa was composed during that time period prior to 1,900 BCE (3). In general, the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas originated around 2,700 BCE to 1,500 BCE.

**Upaniṣads:** Exactly when the Upaniṣads were composed is not known; modern historians date some of the Upaniṣads to be from 7,000 to 5,000 BCE (2). Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad and a minor Upaniṣad called Śivasāṅkalpa Upaniṣad are integral parts of the

Śukla Yajurveda Samhitā; therefore these two were composed at the time of the composition of the Śukla Yajurveda. Āchāndōgyōpaniṣad is thought to be one of the oldest of the Upaniṣads because it is part of the Āchāndōgya Brāhmaṇa itself. The whole Bṛhat Āryṇyaka itself is the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, and therefore it is also considered to be one of the oldest Upaniṣads. In general the composition of the Upaniṣads of the Vēdas is said to belong to the third and second millenniums BCE (3).

**Smṛti:** There is a multitude of smṛti texts. The main scriptures that come under smṛti are the Itihāsas, Purāṇas and Dharma Śāstras. Itihāsa means 'verily it happened thus' and means that it was composed as it happened. The two great epics, Rāmāyaṇa, and Mahābhārata which includes Bhagavad-Gītā, are the Itihāsas. Purāṇa means 'history having the origin in the distant past'. The original Purāṇa which is mentioned in the early Vēdic literature is not available now; eighteen post-Vēdic Purāṇas are available. Dharma-śāstras are the so-called Law-books (4, 5). There are eighteen Śāstras named after the ṛṣis who compiled them (4). The most famous Dharma-śāstra is the Manu-smṛti. There is a considerable controversy about the timing of the Itihāsas; it is generally believed that they occurred more than 5,000 years ago; Rāmāyaṇa is said have preceded the Mahābhārata, but there is some controversy on that also. The Purāṇas composed in the post-Vēdic times have no reference to the Sarasvati River, but give praise to the Gaṅga. In general the Purāṇas were composed in the first millennium of Common Era (CE).

**Dharśanas, Tantras and Śivāgamas** are not included in the above śruti or smṛti texts (5). Dharśanas are the six philosophical systems that are based on the Vēdas and developed by six sages (4, 5). They are Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yōga, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, and Uttara Mīmāṃsā or Vēdānta. The Dharśana scriptures are called Dharma-sūtras. Sūtra is an aphorism with minimal use of the words to project a thought (4). The most famous of the sūtras is the Brahma-sūtra. Another set of scriptures, parallel to the Vēdic scriptures, is called Tantra, the scripture by which knowledge is spread. In addition, there are Buddhist Tantras; Tantra has straddled both Hinduism and Buddhism, and the tantric style teachings can be found even in Jainism (6). Tantric literature mainly consists that of Śaktism. Śivāgamas (earlier version – pūrvāgama) are the basic scriptures of the Śaivas. The later modified version of the Śivāgamas (uttarāgama) is part of the philosophy of the Vīraśaivas. Following the close of the Upaniṣadic period further development of the doctrines about reincarnation, karma, and spiritual liberation resulted in the development of the six philosophical systems. This period ensued into the 'historical' times, and eventually to the well-established dates for Gautama the Buddha (563 BCE to 483 BCE), founder of Buddhism, and Mahāvīra (540 BCE to 468 BCE) the founder of Jainism (3).

**Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi**, also in Sanskrit, is said to be the basic scripture, if not the main scripture, of the Vīraśaivas. The source for this scripture has been stated to be the Vēdas (particularly the Upaniṣads), Śivāgamas (uttarāgamas) and Śivapurāṇas (7, 8). Vaçana śāstra, in Kannaḍa language, is put together as '**Śūnya Saṃpādane**' which forms the main scripture of the Vīraśaivas.



## Sanskrit Script

Script is a written form of language. Ṛgvēda, the most ancient of all compositions, was fashioned along with the old Vēdic Sanskrit language which was purely an oral literature then. The Vēdic seers have stated that 'Saṁskṛtaṁ is the name of a scientifically standardized language evolved by the seers out of the primitive articulate speech by subjecting it to grammatical analysis' (page XV of reference #9 Ṛgvēda Saṁhitā). In this regard references in the Vēdas themselves are given. Ṛgvēda I.164.50 and X.90.16, Kṛṣṇa Yajurvēda III.5.11, Śukla Yajurvēda 31.16, and Atharvavēda VII.5.1 say '*the scholars (here it says dēvas) carried out the operation/yajña (said to mean composition of hymns); these were their first duties/dharma*'.

The Vēdas in ancient Sanskrit/Saṁskṛta have been faithfully passed down orally/verbally over thousands of years. The presence of this strong oral tradition does not preclude ancient written records. It seems that without a script, the Vēdic poets would have found it exceedingly difficult to meet rigorous standards of Sanskrit metric composition. The poets knew more than fifteen distinct metres of composition (3). Furthermore, Śukla Yajurvēda XVII.2 says '*O Agni, may these bricks be mine own kine; one, and ten, and ten tens, a hundred, and ten hundreds, a thousand, and ten thousand a myriad, and a hundred thousand, and a million, and a hundred million, and an ocean middle and end, and a hundred thousand millions, and a billion*' (10, 11). It is stated that counting that involves such large numbers without some form of written annotation is impossible (3). Also, it is to be noted that ancient people of India knew such notation of large numbers thousands of years ago; the concept of one million did not become common in the west until the nineteenth century CE (AD) (3). Furthermore, the geometric design of the Vēdic fire-altar involved mathematical calculation that could not possibly be done in the mind alone; there had to be some sort of writing involved (3). The ancient seers not only had the ability to write numbers, but also knew how to write literature.

Evidences of writing can be inferred from the Vēdas themselves: Ṛgvēda X.62.7 uses the term '*aṣṭa-karṇyaḥ*' meaning 'eight-marked ears' and refers to cattle – 'cattle that had their ears marked with numeral eight'. Atharvavēda XIX.72.1 says that '*Vēda is to be placed back in the chest from where it was taken*', implying that there was a written form of the Vēda then (12). Writing might have been executed on perishable material such as palm leaves, and birch bark or some other form of wood. The earliest form of available writing has been traced as far back as 3,300 BCE. Archeological findings from Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa and other sites reveal about 4,200 objects that have inscriptions on them. They are mainly carvings on seals, small pieces of soft-stone, and a few copper tablets. They reveal a surprisingly mature system of writing. There are about 400 different signs including numerals. The longest text is twenty-six signs long, with an average length of five signs (3).

Because of the false theory of 'Aryan Invasion of India' which had claimed that there was

no Sanskrit or Vēda prior to the so called invasion around 1,500 BCE, it had been thought that the above Indus-valley script was probably related to what had been labeled as the 'Dravidian' language, an old form of Tamil language, thus making deciphering of the script enigmatic. But now that the theory has been disproved and thus defunct (13, 14), the script has been compared to Sanskrit language and the later Brahmi script. This comparison has revealed that the Indus-Sarasvati script evolved into the Brahmi script which is about 2,500 years old (3, 15).

Brāhmī stands for Goddess Sarasvatī the Goddess of learning. Brāhmī script, which is about 2,500 years old, was used by Emperor Aśōka to inscribe his edicts on stone pillars that are found all over India. Current evidence clearly shows that Brāhmī script is derived from the Indus-Sarasvatī script (3, 15). Scripts of all the modern languages of India have originated from the Brāhmī script. From Brāhmī, two prominent branches of scripts developed: The present-day Sanskrit script called the Dēvanāgarī, and the scripts of all the North Indian languages evolved from one branch; and the other branch 'Bhaṭṭiprolu Brāhmī' in South India, also known as 'Pallava Grantha' evolved into the scripts of the languages of South India including the Kannaḍa language (4, 15). **It is to be noted that all the South Indian languages including Kannaḍa, and all the North Indian languages, and the scripts of all these languages, evolved from Sanskrit.**

## Vīraśaiva Concepts in Ṛgvēda

There is a long history of the evolution of Vīraśaivism. Philosophical thoughts and religious practices of Vīraśaivism are traceable to, as far back as, the Ṛgvēdic period. Most scholars now agree that the beginning of this Ṛgvēdic period was around 10,000 BCE. The Ṛgvēda period had been well established during the period prior to 3,100 BCE. It was the golden age of the Vēdas when the Vēdic religious practice was in vogue. **The Vīraśaiva concepts existed early on during the Vēdic period as exemplified by what is in Ṛgvēda itself.**

**The One-God-Argument:** Dēvas/Divinities such as Agni, Indra, Varuṇa and others are portrayed in Ṛgvēda as the personifications of the powers of nature, and as such represent only one main Divinity. Ṛgvēda teaches 'ēka-dēvatā-vāda' which means 'one-God-argument'. It is a progression from naturalistic polytheism to monotheism to monism. Maṇḍala I, sūkta 164, verse 46 of Ṛgvēda goes like this – 'They call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and He is heavenly nobly-winged Garutmān, **To what is One, sages give many a name**, they call It Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan' (16). One of Basavaṇṇa's vaçanas which are in the Kannaḍa language starts with '*dēvanobba nāmahalavu*' which means '**one God, many names**'. It is same as '*ēkam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*' in the above Sanskrit verse. It seems that this vaçana has been taken directly from Ṛgvēda. Another verse of Ṛgvēda (verse 2, sūkta 58 of maṇḍala VIII in reference 9, and the same verse 2 in Vāḷakhilyas sūkta 10 of maṇḍala VIII in reference 16) states '**One is That which has become All**'. This is one of the most important concepts of the Vīraśaivas.

**Rudra as this One-God:** The earliest phase of development of Rudra as the Supreme Being is in the hymns of Ṛgvēda. Rudra is portrayed as this one God who is the aggregate of all these Divinities that are worshipped thereof. There are five sūktas of hymns of praise on Rudra in Ṛgvēda, and the term 'Pañçarudra' refers to these five sūktas. Vīraśaivas have accepted this main Divinity, and it is said '**The unity in diversity depicting that all the divinities are the various powers of one Supreme God, and that they are His forms and sub-forms, is the ultimate truth**' (7).

**The meaning of 'Śiva':** The term 'Śiva' appears many time in Ṛgvēda. It is mainly used to describe Indra; it means 'auspicious, gracious, benign, kind, benevolent, propitious, giver of happiness and such. Indra, like the later concept of Śiva, represents the 'Self' in us. Indra-Śiva as the main God of the Āryas shows the spiritual orientation of the Vēdic religion, its truth of monism and Self-realization (13). Indra is called Śiva in Ṛgvēda II.20.3; VI.45.17; VIII.93.3; VIII.96.10. **Rudra is also called 'Śiva'** in mantra X.92.9; here again the word Śiva is used as a descriptive word meaning propitious. This meaning of the word 'Śiva' seems to match precisely what the Vīraśaivas mean when they say Śiva.

**Vira:** The word *vīra* means 'hero' and it comes many times in the Ṛgvēda. A compound word '*kṣayadvīrāya*' which contains the word *vīra* in it, is used to describe Rudra. Its literal meaning is 'destroyer of heroes' (9), but under the context of where and how this word is used, it is translated to be 'Lord of the Heroes' (16). The term *Vīraśaiva* does not appear in the Ṛgvēda.

**Concept of the 'Creator':** Sūktas 81 and 82 of maṇḍala X of Ṛgvēda are entitled '*Viśvakarman*' which means 'maker of the universe or maker of all'. After the Praḷaya/dissolution of the universe, the creator makes all things anew. Having eyes everywhere, having face everywhere, having arms everywhere, and having feet everywhere, the sole God traverses heaven with his arms, earth with his swift-moving feet, and generates heaven and earth. Some questions about creation are asked and answered in this sūkta. As to what was the place/station, what was the material, how was it done; it says *Viśvakarman* the beholder of all, generating earth, with mighty power disclosed the heavens. As to what was the wood/forest, what was the tree from which they fashioned out the heaven and earth; it commands the thoughtful to inquire in their minds where *Viśvakarman* stood when establishing all things, and by that understand *Viśvakarman* as the material and instrumental cause. Then in the second of the sūktas, it says there was water alone from which the first seed emerged, and describes *Viśvakarman* as omniscient and omnipotent.

The commentators say that this mantra implies that *Viśvakarman* is *Paramēśvara*, and that it is *Paramātman*. The philosophical discussion in these sūktas is part of the philosophy of the *Vīraśaivas*. The *Vīraśaivas* also believe in the 'Creator' and the creation of the universe; and that *Paramātman* is both the material cause and the instrumental cause. The omniscient and omnipotent nature of God is also accepted. The mantras' 'commanding the thoughtful to inquire in their minds' statement induces one to contemplate/meditate; this is part of *yōga* practice of the *Vīraśaivas*.

It is indeed remarkable to note that part of the Ṛgvēdic mantra X.81.3 in this *Viśvakarma* sūkta is used word for word in one of *Basavaṇṇa*'s *vaḥanas*. The mantra in Sanskrit is as follows.

***'Viśvataścakṣu viśvatōmukhō viśvatōbāhuruta viśvataspāt  
Sām bāhubhyām dhamati sām pavatraindhyāvābhūmī janayandēva ēkaḥ'***

This verse is translated as 'Having eyes everywhere, having a face everywhere, having arms everywhere, and having feet everywhere, it traverses heaven with arms, earth with swift-moving feet, and exists a God without companion generating heaven and earth' (9).

The corresponding *Kannāḍa vaḥana* of *Basavaṇṇa* is as follows.

*'ettetta nōdidaḍatta nīnē dēvā; sakala vistārada rūhu nīnē dēvā; viśvataścakṣu nīnē dēvā; viśvatōmukha nīnē dēvā; viśvatōbāhu nīnē dēvā; viśvataspāda nīnē dēva Kūḍalasaṅgamadēvā'.*

The vaċana starts with 'wherever we look you (God) are there'. And the words taken verbatim have the same meaning in Sanskrit and Kannaḁa: Having eyes everywhere, having face everywhere, having arms everywhere, and having feet everywhere.

**The concept that everything that is projected out is still within God and that everything is still one:** Sūkta 90 of Ṛgvēda is called 'Puruṣa sūkta'. Puruṣa is the primordial/cosmic person. With a thousand (meaning infinite number of) heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand legs, pervading the earth from all sides, Puruṣa envelops everything. Puruṣa is verily this - all that is, all that ever was and all that is to be. Such is the greatness of Puruṣa that all beings are only from one-fourth of Puruṣa; these beings are born again and again, the other three-fourths of Puruṣa being immortal in heaven. Gods offering sacrifice, bound Puruṣa, their victim of sacrifice, and they worshipped the sacrifice; those were the first duties, the eternal holy Dharma.

Puruṣa envelops everything, and Puruṣa is this all, gives rise to the later Upaniṣadic statement of '*sarvaṃ khalvidam brahma*' which means 'all this, verily, is Brahman'. That all beings are only part of Puruṣa, gives rise to the concept of Jīvātman and Paramātman, both being one and the same. The world/universe becomes manifest when God projects the world out of Self, and the world after its manifestation is still inside God; that way everything is still one, one Reality. All these concepts are part of the Vīraśaiva philosophy.

**Praḁaya and cycles of creation-evolution-maintenance-dissolution:** As above in the Viśvakarma sūkta under the concept of the 'Creator' it is stated that 'after the Praḁaya/dissolution of the universe, the creator makes all things anew'. The creation is beginning-less and endless with an infinite series of successive creations and dissolutions. In sūkta 121 titled 'Ka' which is an interrogative pronoun meaning 'who' or 'what', beginning of one cycle is explained. It introduces and describes Hiraṇyagarbha which means 'golden egg' or 'golden embryo' or 'cosmic egg'. Hiraṇyagarbha is also known as Brahmā, Sūtrāman, Kāryabrahman and such. It is said that Māyā playing upon Brahman causes the first manifestation of Hiraṇyagarbha in the beginning of the cycle of creation-evolution-maintenance-dissolution, there being a new Hiraṇyagarbha in every cycle. Hiraṇyagarbha in turn creates the universe of that specific cycle (17). It is to be noted that Hiraṇyagarbha is not Viśvakarman, nor Paramēśvara or Paramātman.

Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi (18) states that Śiva, with the desire to create the universe, first created Brahma as the maker of all beings and all the worlds; to His first son (meaning Brahma as above), Śiva taught with grace all the sacred knowledge. Here, Śiva is Paramātman or Parabrahman, and Brahma (not Brahman) is Hiraṇyagarbha. Re-absorption of everything, in reverse order of creation, into Paramātman is adopted Vīraśaiva philosophy.

**Creation:** The Nāsadiya sūkta X.129 of Ṛgvēda is said to be the most important sūkta among the sūktas dealing with the subject of creation (17). Certain fundamental aspects

of creation given in the seven mantras of this sūкта are completely accepted by the Vīraśaivas. This sūкта is translated as follows (9, 16).

**In the beginning there was not the non-existent, nor the existent;** there was no realm of air or the sky beyond it. What covered in and where? What gave shelter? Was water there, the unfathomed depth of water?

Death was not then, nor was immortality; no sign was there of the day's and night's divider. **'That One' thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature (power); apart from it there was nothing whatsoever.** (The Sanskrit word `svadhā' is used here to mean 'by its own nature'; the commentator Sāyaṇācārya takes it to mean 'Māyā'; the Vīraśaivas equate it to 'Śakti'.)

Darkness was there, at first concealed in darkness; all this was in-discriminated chaos. All that existed then was **Void**; by the great power of tapas (austerity) was born **That One**.

Thereafter rose **Desire**, the primal seed; sages having meditated in their hearts, discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent.

Across was their line extended; what was above it and what was below it? There were begetters, there were mighty forces, free action here and energy up yonder (creation of the universe was instantaneous).

Who really knows and who can here declare it? Whence was this creation and whence was it born? Dēvas (Gods) were subsequent to the creation, so who knows when it arose.

The One who first arose, whether formed it all, or did not form it, no one knows; whose eye controls this in the highest of the heaven verily knows it, or perhaps knows not.

All Vīraśaiva philosophers, and particularly Prabhudēva, hold the view that the world evolved out of nothing. In the beginning there was nothing, not even Śūnya (Void) or Niśśūnya (Primal Void). Then Śaraṇa arose. This is the fundamental theory of the Vīraśaivas (1, 19). It is the same concept as it is in the above Nāsadiya sūкта. Furthermore, the concept of Power/Śakti as above in 'breathed by its own nature (power)', and the concept of 'desire' as above are part of the Vīraśaiva philosophy of creation.

**Liṅga:** Although the word 'Liṅga' itself does not appear in the Rḡvēdic mantra IX.83.1, it is left for the one who recites/reads to interpret it as such. This mantra also appears in Sāmavēda verses 565 and 875 (9).

*'pavitram te vitatam brahmaṇaspate prabhurgātrāṇi paryeṣi viśvataḥ; ataptatanūrna tadāmō aśnute śrutāsa idvahanīstatsamāśata'.*

The passage is as follows. *'O Brahmanaspati! Your sacred (Liṅga) is expansive; Prabhu you pervade the devotees from all sides. The raw whose mass is not heated does not get it; only the processed who undergo attain it.'*

Because the actual term that the passage means is not mentioned there, instead of the term 'Liṅga', the word 'filter' has been used in some of the English translations (16); it is considered there to be a self-purification process with an internal 'filter' (3).

Interpretation of this passage is as follows: Brahmanaspati is the 'Lord of Prayer' who pervades all the devotees as Liṅga. Liṅga is sacred, pure and expansive. The body of the ignorant not purified by the process of **dīkṣa**/initiation does not get the Liṅga. Only those who are processed and possess the knowledge, and who resort to that Liṅga, attain the Liṅga.

Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi in verse VI.58 says that **Liṅgadhāraṇa** has been advocated for the Vīraśaivas in the Vēdas. Then as to where the Liṅgadhāraṇa is known in the Vēdas, in verse VI.59 it says as follows.

*"O Brahmanaspati! Your 'Liṅga' is sacred and all-pervasive" - says the Ṛgvēda. Hence the Liṅga is sacred and without defects; it should be borne.*

In summary, the concepts described above are some of the most important of the philosophical concepts of Vīraśaivism. These concepts existed, and were put into practice in the Ṛgvēdic period which began about 10,000 BCE, and which was well established prior to 3,100 BCE. It was the golden age of the Vēdas when the Vēdic religious practice was in vogue.

## Vīraśaiva Concepts in Yajurvēda

A brief statement about Yajurvēda may be appropriate here. Yajurvēda is a collection of yajus that are in the form of sacrificial formulas. It has 1,975 mantras, one-third of which is taken from Ṛgvēda; the rest is original and most of it is in prose form. The mantras are arranged in Yajurvēda to suit sacrificial necessities of the time. It is said that the freshness and simplicity of the hymns of Ṛgvēda give rise to coldness and artificiality of the mantras of Yajurvēda, and that the priests become the lords (3). Although Yajurvēda reflects the true principles of earlier Ṛgvēda, it shows some new developments. When Vēda Vyāsa compiled the four Vēdas, he entrusted one of his four chief disciples, sage Vaiśampāyana, to preserve the Yajurvēda for posterity. This was the original version of the Yajurvēda. Vaiśampāyana taught this Vēda to his disciples including his chief disciple Yājñavalkya who in turn was supposed to do the same. However, it appears that Yājñavalkya had his own revelations from Sūrya (the Sun Divinity) in the form of a new and different version of Yajurvēda named Śukla (white/bright) Yajurvēda. Hence, the original version, in retrospect was named Kṛṣṇa (black/dark) Yajurvēda. The later Sukla version is completely in hymn form. It has 2,086 mantras, of which some are repeats and many are strophes (divisions of poems). Śukla version also deals mainly with the sacrifices. The order of rites and ceremonies is substantially identical with the Kṛṣṇa version.

Yajurvēda includes formulas for all sacrifices, and gives the hymns of Ṛgvēda, a practical shape in the form of yajña (4). Although the term yajña signifies a ritual or a sacrificial ceremony performed at the various junctures of life, the Vēdic scholars developed the system to explain and elucidate the various aspects of spiritual, astronomical and terrestrial sciences. The yajñas were performed in a time bound span from one day to thousand years in order to retain astronomical records of various movements of earth, moon, and various planets and stars. The terrestrial yajñas were performed in precise conformity with the cosmic yajñas going on in the celestial sphere, or the Brahma yajña going on at the spiritual level (10). The development of sacrificial ceremonies was for the purpose of self-purification and self-accomplishment; it appears that the ceremonies became mostly ritualistic.

Although the Vīraśaivas accept the sacrificial ceremonies for the purpose of self-purification and self-accomplishment, they despise the ritualistic ceremonies. Therefore most of the Yajurvēdic contents are not acceptable. But Yajurvēda has some of the most important Vīraśaiva concepts.

There is this **Śatarudriya** which means hundred forms of Rudra (20). **Rudra is addressed as the Supreme Being** who is omnipresent and manifests in a myriad forms for the sake of the spiritual aspirants. The main part is called '**namaka**' because most of the mantras in its eleven sub-chapters/anuvākas contain 'namaḥ' or 'namō-namaḥ' in them. 'Namaḥ' is obeisance; it means complete surrender, humility, homage, bow-down in respect and such. Also there is this pañcākṣari/five-syllable mantra '**Namaḥ Śivāya**'



in the IV.5.8.11 mantra. Yajurvēda paves the way for the development of the Rudra-Śiva concept as the Brahman. **Rudra-Śiva as the Supreme Being, Obeisance to this Supreme Being, and using the 'Namaḥ Śivāya' mantra, are the cardinal concepts of the Viraśaivas.**

Further, two of the most important principles of Viraśaivas are **dignity of labor** and **equality among all** irrespective of caste, creed, gender and such. These two principles are exemplified in the Yajurvēda in two different parts of the Saṁhitā.

In the Śatarudrīya, dignity of labor is emphasized by respecting all sorts of professions and vocations, and as such, all categories of persons, irrespective of their caste or creed, are addressed respectfully and honored with homage. Rudra is present in everyone irrespective of one's caste or creed; therefore, persons of all categories are honored with homage; the obeisance is to Rudra within them. Actual names of the castes are not mentioned, but their descriptions clearly indicate those.

In the Puruṣamēdha part of Yajurvēda, there is a detailed description of the process of initiation for various individuals into various jobs or professions according to their aptitude and personality traits. It is sort of training the individuals for various professions; Yajurvēda describes 184 professions under which individuals can be trained. It is meant for training of individuals into various professions required to run a highly advanced society in the beginning of human civilization (10).

It is stated in Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi (18) that the order of life related to caste (varṇāśramadharmā) is of two types; one is ordained by Śiva as a result of Dīkṣā, and the other is as told by Brahmanā; the latter practices caste-discrimination where as the former states **one who has received Śivadīkṣā should not make any caste discrimination, and should honor the nobility of all professions and equality of all castes.**

Then there is this 'ĉamaka' in the seventh chapter in the fourth book of Taittirīya Saṁhitā of Kṛṣṇa Yajurvēda. It is called ĉamaka because it has 'ĉa-me' in its mantras. 'ĉa-me' means something like 'may it be granted to me also'. ĉamaka has a leading statement in its tenth anuvāka - '*yajñēna kalpatām*' which means something like 'may everything in this world be offered to God as worship'. This leading statement is to be repeated with each of the mantras in ĉamaka, not just in the tenth anuvāka. Thus it would be '**May everything in this world be offered to God as worship, and May it be granted to me also**'. This gives rise to the concept of '**Prasāda**' of the Viraśaivas where everything is offered as prasāda with a sense of self-dedication and self-surrender, and without any type of attachment; it is said that 'when it is offered properly, the fire of knowledge burns the illusion of desire into an illumination of joy' (19).

Thus, Yajurvēda, particularly the Śatarudrīya part, has some of the most important concepts practiced by the Viraśaivas.

## **Vīraśaiva Concepts in Sāmavēda**

Mantras of Ṛgvēda, which are useful to the Udgātr̥-priest, have been brought together in Sāmavēda. Sāmavēda Saṁhitā has 1,875 mantras (1,821 from another count) of which 1,800 are from Ṛgvēda. Sāman is a mantra from Ṛgvēda that is set to melodious music in Sāmavēda (4). Conversion of ṛ̥cas of Ṛgvēda into Sāmagānas/Sāmans of Sāmavēda has resulted in some textual variations and alteration of the mantras of Ṛgvēda (21, 22). In Yajñas (sacrificial ceremonies) the Udgātr̥-priest sings appropriate Sāmans of Sāmavēda in order to ensure the grace of the Divinities (4). It is singing, not just chanting. There are several variations of singing the Sāmans. It is a difficult task to learn, and needs expert guidance (2). Mantras of Sāmavēda, simply known as Sāmans, have seven svaras or musical scales identical with the seven scales of Classical Music of India. Hence Indian Classical Music has its origin from Sāmavēda.

Because almost all the mantras have been taken from Ṛgvēda, the Vīraśaiva concepts in Sāmavēda would be same as those in Ṛgvēda. But, only 1,800 of 10,589 mantras of Ṛgvēda have been taken into Sāmavēda, therefore, there is not much in the way of Vīraśaiva concepts in Sāmavēda.

## **Vīraśaiva Concepts in Atharvavēda**

Atharvavēda is generally considered to have been composed in an era considerably more recent than the Ṛgvēda (3). The literary style is also more sophisticated, indicating that the work is chronologically of a later origin than the Ṛgvēda (2). There are 5,977 mantras, 6,077 mantras, by another count. The mantras are in prose as well as in verse form. About one fifth of the hymns are drawn from Ṛgvēda. Atharvavēda is mainly used for the accomplishment of all worldly acts, as it is fruitful for this material world. The hymns are meant to secure long life, to get good wishes of the dēvas/divinities in many household matters, to ward-off misfortune, to obtain kingship, and such things (12, 23). Major part of this Vēda is concerned with diseases and their cure, rites for prolonging life and fulfilling one's desires, and also rites for building construction, trade and commerce, penance, black magic, and other subject matters (2, 4).

The term 'Atharva' is said to mean 'the attainment of the stability of mind with exercising modesty and non-violence' (12). Atharvavēda stands apart from the other three Vēdas and not revered as much because of its special features. It contains many spells and verbal charms or formulas of words spoken or sung as part of ritual, which are not used in the orthodox ritual ceremonies (3). Atharvavēda has in it the formulae for effacing the hurdles of a peaceful, successful and prosperous life. It is said that the people who understand the formulae for avoidance of the hurdles and suppression of the wicked, appreciate these as skillful and expert processes, and not magic (12).

Homage to Rudra comes many a times in the Atharvavēda, but there is no significant presence of any Vīraśaiva concepts.

## Summary of Vīraśaiva Concepts in the Vēdas

Summary of the Vīraśaiva concepts that already existed during the Vēdic period is as follows:

One God Argument in Ṛgvēda: 'To what is One, sages give many a name' is the same as 'dēvanobba nāma halavu' meaning 'one God many names'.

Rudra as this one God: Rudra is portrayed in Ṛgvēda as the aggregate of all the Divinities that are worshipped thereof.

Meaning of 'Śiva': Ṛgvēda uses the term Śiva many times to describe different Divinities including Rudra so that the meaning of 'Śiva' is brought out clearly.

Concept of the Creator: 'God' as the creator of the universe is given in the Viśvakarma sūkta of Ṛgvēda. 'God' is described as omniscient and omnipotent. Seekers of God are induced to contemplate/meditate.

The concept of everything is One only: everything that is projected out of God (created) is still within God and that everything is still one, is given in the Puruṣa sūkta of Ṛgvēda.

The concept of Praḷaya/dissolution of the created universe gives rise to the concept of re-absorption into God in the reverse order of creation.

Creation: Nāsadiya sūkta of Ṛgvēda gives the details of creation as accepted by the Vīraśaivas. 'In the beginning there was not the non-existent, nor the existent' is the same as 'In the beginning there was nothing, not even Śūnya (Void) or Niśśūnya (Primal Void)'. The concept of Power/Śakti as in 'breathed by its own nature (power)' and the concept of 'desire' are part of the Vīraśaiva philosophy of creation.

Liṅga and Liṅgadīkṣa: Ṛgvēdic mantra IX.83.1 is as follows. 'God' pervades all the devotees as Liṅga. Liṅga is sacred, pure and expansive. The body of the ignorant not purified by the process of dīkṣa/initiation does not get It. Only those who are processed and possess the knowledge, and who resort to that Liṅga, attain the Liṅga. Please note that the term 'Liṅga' does not appear there.

Then in Yajurvēda, the following concepts of Vīraśaivas are affirmed.

Rudra becomes Śiva, and is addressed as the Supreme Being.

There is this pañcākṣari/five-syllable mantra 'Namaḥ Śivāya' in the IV.5.8.11 mantra.

Two of the most important principles of Vīraśaivas are 'dignity of labor' and 'equality

among all irrespective of caste, creed, gender and such'. These two principles are exemplified in the Yajurvēda.

Beginning of the concept of Prasāda: 'May everything in this world be offered to God as worship, and May it be granted to me also' gives rise to the concept of 'Prasāda' of the Vīraśaivas where everything is offered as prasāda with a sense of self-dedication and self-surrender, and without any type of attachment.

The above concepts are some of the most important philosophical concepts of Vīraśaivas. These concepts originated during the Vēdic period which began around 10,000 BCE. The Vēdic period had been well established prior to 3,100 BCE.

## **Archaeological Findings of the Vēdic Civilization**

The most extraordinary finding of Indian archaeology is that there is no noticeable break in the series of cultural developments from 8,000 Before Common Era (BCE/BC) to modern India (3). In the Indian Subcontinent, a continuous sequence of dwelling-sites from 7,000 BCE has been established.

**The Discovery:** It was the building of India's railway system in the nineteenth century of the Common Era (CE/AD) that revealed the secrets of the Vēdic Civilization (24). British were ruling India then. Two British engineer-brothers, in 1856 CE, were having difficulty laying tracks for the East India Railway on the sandy soil in the Indus River valley area, and were looking for some hard material to be used for the railroad bed. One of the brothers heard about a nearby ancient ruined city called Brahminabad, and he went there. The Brahminabad city had been built using hard well-burnt bricks. He took the bricks from there and used them to strengthen the railroad-bed. Brahminabad was later named as Mohenjo-Daro. Similarly, north of there, the other brother found another city called Harappa, and plundered the prehistoric city of Harappa for ballast. They used these ancient bricks to lay down about 93 miles of railroad tracks; some invaluable evidence was destroyed in that plundering. General Sir Alexander Cunningham excavated the area in 1872 when he was the Director General of the Indian Archaeological Survey. He published the discovery in 1875, but it went unnoticed. In 1920 Sir John Marshall, the Director General of Archaeology in India, sent an Indian archaeologist Daya Ram Sahni to start excavating the mounds of Harappa, and in 1922 another Indian archaeologist R. D. Banerji started to excavate at the Mohenjo-Daro site. In 1931 Sir John Marshall proposed that the Harappa Age matured during the period from 3,100 BCE to 2,750 BCE (24). At the time of independence from the British in 1947, India was partitioned into India and Pakistan; the above two sites are in the present day Pakistan. Since then hundreds of other sites have been discovered in present day India.

Then in 1974, the archaeologists made another startling and far-reaching discovery – the discovery of the town of Mehrgarh in Baluchistan of the present day Pakistan (3). The excavations at the site have yielded an early date of around 7,000 BCE. There is no noticeable break in the series of cultural developments from Mehrgarh to Harappa to modern India.

**Mehrgarh:** This site was discovered by a team of archaeologists directed by a French archaeologist. The site covers an area of over 500 acres, and it has a number of successive settlements dated between 7,000 BCE to 2,600 BCE. It is one of the earliest sites with evidence of farming wheat and barley, and herding cattle, sheep and goats. The oldest of the settlements was a farming village dated between 7,000 BCE and 5,500 BCE. The early Mehrgarh residents lived in rectangular mud-brick houses, stored grain in granaries, fashioned tools with local copper ore, and lined their large basket containers with bitumen (Wikipedia.org). At the oldest site, three primitively fashioned human

figurines made out of unfired clay have been found; they probably not the only ones crafted at the time (3).

It is astonishing to note that evidence for the drilling of teeth in living persons was found in Mehrgarh – eleven drilled molar crowns from nine adults discovered in a Neolithic graveyard dating from 7,500 to 9,000 years ago – the oldest and the first evidence in human history for drilling the teeth in living adult human beings (Wikipedia.org).

The site showed that during the periods from 5,500 BCE to 3,500 BCE, pottery was in use, beads decorated with opaque colored glazes were produced, terra-cotta figurines became more detailed, and button-seals were produced from terracotta and bone material, the seals had geometric designs. The figurines are thought to be some religious objects; some of them may represent mother goddess.

Mehrgarh is considered as a precursor to the Indus-Sarasvati civilization; the archaeological findings show a continuous series of cultural developments from Mehrgarh to Harappa and then to modern India.

**The Harappan World:** Since the archaeological discovery of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, hundreds of other sites have been described. These include major sites at Ganweriwala, Rakhigarhi, Dholavira, Kalibangan, and Lothal; the first three sites are comparable in size to Mohenjo-Daro. In addition to the above large urban centers, the landscape of ancient India was dotted with numerous villages and towns. The Harappan World covers an area around 300,000 square miles, stretching from the Himalayas in the north to the Gōdāvarī River in modern Karnāṭaka in the south of India, and from the Indus River in the west to the plains of Gaṅga and Yamuna Rivers in the east. Most of the sites are situated in the desert plains in India, formerly watered by several rivers including the Sarasvati River which was larger than the Indus. The Harappan Vēdic culture area by far exceeds in size the combined area occupied by the Sumerian and the Egyptian Civilizations (3)

Detailed explanation of the archaeological findings is beyond the scope of this article and the book. Brief descriptions are given here.

The layout of the settlements, which is said to be well planned, is regular with streets crossing one another at right angles, the larger cities and towns having been divided into districts, and a high rectangular fortress like structure with bath houses and a granary commanding the view of the rest of the city to the east. The houses, some are two or more stories high, are built of standardized baked bricks. Each house has several rooms around a square courtyard. The houses have bathrooms which are connected by drains to the brick-lined sewers underneath the main street. The houses open on to the small side-streets, not the main streets. All this was about 5,000 years ago.

Numerous sacrificial fire-altars, mostly of rectangular or square shape and some of round

or ovoid shape constructed with burnt-bricks are found all over ancient India. Some of the sacrificial fire-altars contained ashes of charcoal and the offerings of beads and gold.

There is a great deal of evidence to show that trade was various and wide-ranging (24). Lothal, at the head of the Gulf of Cambay in India, has the largest brick structure known to have been built then, the so-called Warf of Lothal measuring 230 yards by 40 yards, the city serving as a seaport. Furthermore, remarkable system of weights and measures has been found.

Striking pieces of art have been found. Clay figurines probably representing the mother goddess, bust of a bearded man probably representing a priest, superb artistic sculpture of male torso, 'dancing-girl' figurine, a bronze artifact 'Vasishtha head', and many other artifacts have been found (3).

The excavation in India have been particularly rewarding in the number of recovered seals (3); thousands have been found, mostly of square or rectangular shape, in contrast to the mostly round seals of Mehrgarh. Many seals carry glyphs of neatly designed script dated to as far back as 3,300 BCE (see 'Sanskrit Script' article). Many other seals depict animals including the bull-unicorn and the humped bull, and some show humans.

One type of remarkable soapstone seals of particular interest, many experts agree, is an early representation of **Śiva** as **Paśupati** which means 'Lord of the Beasts'. The Śiva figure is seated straight on a throne-like pedestal, cross-legged with outstretched arms resting on the knees in the so-called lotus-position of the Yōga. On the head there is an elaborate head-gear which has two symmetrical horns. The face is somewhat mask-like; there might be an extension of the head-gear. The chest and arms are decorated with ornaments or adorned with sacred ash (vibhūti). There is a representation of a decorated belt on the waist. At the top portion of the seal above the figure, there are six symbols or glyphs. On either side of the figure, there is an elephant facing away from, and a rhinoceros, a buffalo and a tiger facing toward the figure. At the bottom portion of the seal there are two antelopes.

**Liṅga:** What is more interesting is the discovery in the valleys of not only larger sthāvāra Liṅgas, but also the miniature Liṅgas (7). It is believed that these miniature Liṅgas are meant to be worn on the body. Scholars, including Sir John Marshall, who have examined the miniature Liṅgas, have affirmed that the smaller Liṅgas, of about 5,000 years ago, are the sacred objects to be carried on the person, similar to the wearing of the Liṅgas by the present day Viraśaivas.

What has been found archaeologically is similar to what is mentioned in the Vēdas. There are many parallels in geography, culture, and chronology between the Vēdic society, as mirrored in the hymns of the Vēdas, and the Indus-Sarasvati civilization as reflected in the archaeological artifacts (3).



## **Viraśaivas in the Vēdic Period**

The Vēdic civilization flourished during the fourth and third millenniums BCE. Development of Viraśaiva concepts and practices occurred during the Vēdic period. The preceding articles have described the evidences for this development. The Vēdas and the archaeological findings concur that the development of Viraśaiva concepts and practices occurred during the Vēdic period. However the term 'Viraśaiva' does not appear during this period; but it has been recognized that the Śaivas and Pāśupatas were present then. The Pāśupatas carried portable miniature Liṅgas with them, and engaged in religious practices. It is said that there were two categories of Pāśupatas, the Vaidika Pāśupatas who practiced Vēdic concepts and the Aavidika Pāśupatas who did not. The latter group has been criticized at a much later date by the great Vēdāntic scholar Śankarācārya. The Vaidika Pāśupatas on the other hand have been recognized to be the Viraśaivas of the Vēdic period (7).

Practicing Viraśaivas were already present during the period of the Mahābhārata. The discussion between Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma described in Anuṣāsana-parvan 22.1-2 of Mahābhārata reveals this evidence. Yudhiṣṭhira respectfully asked Bhīṣma about who is eligible to receive 'Dāna' (donation) – the Brāhmaṇas who are wearing the Liṅgas or the Brāhmaṇas who are not wearing the Liṅgas. Bhīṣma answered that both Brāhmaṇas wearing the Liṅgas and the Brāhmaṇas who are not wearing the Liṅgas are eligible to receive the 'Dāna' provided that they are engaged in religious practices and engaged in the penance (7). The question then arises as to when this Mahābhārata period was in relation to the Vēdic period. There is much controversy about this date; it is explained in the article 'Vyāsa'.

## Upaniṣads

Vēdas, the most sacred of all the Hindu scriptures, consist of the specific Saṁhitās and their appendages. The appendages are the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads. Upaniṣads are the best known aspects of the Vēdic literature. They not only come at the end of the textual presentation of the Vēdas but also contain the ultimate goal of the realization of the end-product of the Vēdas. Thus the Upaniṣads as a group are called Vēdānta. Vēdas, in all, are generally considered to have two portions. The first part is the portion dealing with action or rituals (karma kāṇḍa) with the belief that Mōkṣa (salvation) can be obtained through the right performance of rituals as enjoined in the Vēdas. And the second part comes at the end of the Vēdas, in the Upaniṣads, dealing with knowledge (jñāna kāṇḍa), that is said to be the quintessence of the Vēdas (4).

Meditation on the Supreme Self as the way of redemption is the theme of the Upaniṣads. **The Upaniṣadic teachers have declared that Truth is open for thorough inquiry, and that, being universal, it can be realized in anyone's life at anytime. It is not reserved for any one privileged person or a group, nor is it confined by time or space (2).**

Of the 200 or so available Upaniṣads, it is said that only 108 are of any importance and are worthy of study, and that eleven of these are the most popular (5). These are - Īśāvāsya, Kēna, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitarēya, Ćhāndōgya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Śvetāśvatara. Upaniṣads other than these are considered as 'minor' Upaniṣads. **Brief descriptions of Major and Minor Upaniṣads applicable to the Viraśaiva concepts are in Part II of this book; please refer to it.**

## Upaniṣads and Viraśaiva Scriptures

It is said that the Upaniṣads are the authorities for the formulation of the religious as well as the philosophical concepts of Viraśaivas, and that, from the Upaniṣads, the Śivāgamas and the Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi are totally influenced in the elucidation of these concepts (7). The most important one of all the Viraśaiva concepts is the Ṣaṭsthala system. In this system, spiritual ascent in six stages involves Bhakti/devotion, Jñāna/knowledge, and Kriyā/action. Development of the Ṣaṭsthala system, by harmoniously combining devotion, knowledge and action, has been through the influence of the Upaniṣads (7).

Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi (7, 18) and Śūnya Saṃpādane (1) are the two main scriptures of the Viraśaivas. Explanatory notes and comment sections of these two scriptures frequently refer to the Upaniṣads for their elucidation. The referenced Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi book (7), at its beginning, gives a list of abbreviations of the references. Of the listed 109 material, 49 are for the Upaniṣads. Similarly, the referenced Śūnya Saṃpādane (1) which has five volumes has lists of abbreviated references in its five volumes.

Volume I has a list of 76 references, and 38 of them are for the Upaniṣads.

Volume II has a list of 57 references, and 5 are for the Upaniṣads.

Volume III has a list of 79 references, and 9 are for Upaniṣads.

Volume IV has a list of 59 references, and 4 are for Upaniṣads.

Volume V has a list of 25 references, but there are no references to Upaniṣads.

More importantly, it is not just the number of references to the Upaniṣads; it is how the Upaniṣads are incorporated into the Viraśaiva scriptures.

Right at the outset in the Preface of the referenced Śūnya Saṃpādane (1), a Śāntipāṭha/peace-lesson of the Upaniṣads is used to explain what Śūnya is. All the Upaniṣads begin with a peace invocation before the main teachings, and also end with the same or a different peace invocation. Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad has the following peace invocation at the beginning as well as at the end; and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads also use the same peace invocation.

*Ōm pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṃ pūrṇāt pūrṇamudaḥyate  
Pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate.  
Ōm śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ!*

'Ōm, that *invisible* is the Infinite, this *visible* too is the Infinite; from the Infinite the whole *universe* has arisen. Of the Infinite the whole *universe* having come, the Infinite alone remains the same. Ōm! Peace! Peace! Peace!'

Before giving this peace invocation in transliterated Sanskrit only, the Śūnya Saṃpādane

states that 'Śūnya' is identical with the Upaniṣadic word 'Pūrṇa' in this śāntipāṭha. It is the Absolute, the Infinite. It is described as only one, eternal, permanent, beyond the pairs of opposites, free from the three qualities/guṇas, always a witness of all actions, and it is perfect and complete in all respects. After giving the peace invocation, it says "So the Śūnya of the Vīraśaiva Śaraṇas is not 'emptiness', but is equivalent to the Upaniṣadic Parabrahman or Paramātman". Then it states again "...the word 'Śūnya' of the Vīraśaiva Śaraṇas indicates the Infinite, the Absolute, the Brahman or Parabrahman of the Upaniṣads ..."

What is more striking is the statement in the concluding remarks of the Śūnya Saṃpādane itself. It is as follows:

This is the best guide, the philosophical system of exalted Vīraśaiva doctrine.

This is that which expounds and firmly establishes the Vīraśaiva practice.

**This is the crest-jewel of the divine Vēdānta.**

This is the chief mirror of all the sciences.

This is the teaching of the highest Experience to promote the Supreme Knowledge.

This is a catalogue of those who, endowed with all kinds of religious practice, have attained the Height.

This is a treasury of the attainment of the great Rājayōga.

This is a happy feast of the ambrosial essence of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, eternal and perfect.

This is a great conference of Prabhudēva on the attainment of Śūnya – an instrument to remove the blindness of ignorance.

This concluding remark is a profound statement. It has a great impact on the philosophy and practice of the Vīraśaivas. As above, one of the statements is that the Śūnya Saṃpādane is the crest-jewel of the Divine Vēdānta. Upaniṣads are the Vēdānta; they come at the end of the Vēdas. The Upaniṣads, dealing with knowledge (jñāna kāṇḍa), are said to be the quintessence of the Vēdas.

Vīraśaiva Philosophy and Vīraśaiva practice have evolved from what is in the Upaniṣads. Thus it is advisable to review the Upaniṣads. For details of the ten 'major' Upaniṣads, please refer to the book 'A Journey Through Sacred Hindu Scriptures' by Linga Raju, M.D. Published in the year 2013 by Sid-Asha Publishing Company, 70 Rieder Road, Edison, NJ 08817; the electronic version of the second edition of this book has been published by Veerashaiva Samaja of North America in 2013. **Brief descriptions of Major and Minor Upaniṣads applicable to the Vīraśaiva concepts are in Part II of this book; please refer to it.**

## Ṣaṭsthala Concepts from the Upaniṣads

The Viraśaiva concept of Ṣaṭsthala is the spiritual hierarchy of six stages through which the seeker rises stage by stage till the apparent duality vanishes and attains oneness. This process of attaining oneness is called Śūnyasaṃpādane. The Ṣaṭsthalas are Bhaktasthala, Māhēśvarasthala, Prasādisthala, Prāṇaliṅgasthala, Śaraṇasthala and Aikyasthala.

Please note that the Śūnyasaṃpādane book (1) gives Upaniṣadic references by transliterating in English of the actual Sanskrit texts, and does not give translations of the Sanskrit texts. The term 'Ṣaṭsthala' and the concept of what Ṣaṭsthala means, do not appear in the Upaniṣads.

Śūnyasaṃpādane (1) on page 55 of volume I states that, Prabhudēva was the sovereign of *Ṣaṭsthala*. The first chapter in Śūnyasaṃpādane, entitled 'Prabhudēva's Śūnyasaṃpādane' with 78 of Prabhudēva's vaṇanas, is the most important part of the Śūnyasaṃpādane scripture; it contains the Ṣaṭsthala Philosophy.

**Pinḍasthala:** Śūnyasaṃpādane begins with Pindasthala as one of the preliminary steps prior to Bhaktasthala. The literal meaning of 'piṇḍa' is 'lump' or 'round mass', and refers to the body of a person. In Pinḍasthala, piṇḍa means a purified individual-self (Jīvātman/Aṅga) aspiring to be united with the Universal-Self (Paramātman/Liṅga). Divine immanence can be recognized only by one who is aspiring to achieve the goal. The characteristic of this step is that the aspiring soul Aṅga visualizes the existence of Liṅga in one's own body.

The first two vaṇanas in Śūnyasaṃpādane describe this sthala. Here Prabhudēva explains the nature of Divine immanence by means of similes – The latency of Ātman is as the spark in stone, image in water, tree in the seed, and silence in sound – and states that it cannot be perceived by a common person, but the one who experiences the joy of that realization knows it.

This concept is taken from several Upaniṣads. Kaṭhōpaniṣad III.12 says 'The Ātman hidden in all beings, reveals not, but is seen by seers of the subtle through focused and subtle intellect'. Śvetāśvatarōpaniṣad I.15 and Brahmōpaniṣad 19 have the same mantra quoted in the Śūnyasaṃpādane – 'As oil in sesame seeds, as butter in curds, as water in the underground springs, and as fire in wood, in like manner, this Ātman is perceived in the self by those who by means of truthfulness, self-control and concentration look again and again'.

**Pinḍa-jñāna-sthala:** In Pinḍa-jñāna-sthala, one grasps the discriminative knowledge that the individual-self Jīva is totally different from the body, the senses and the intellect.

The third vaċana in Śūnyasaṃpāḁane is the Viraśaiva concept of the universe evolving out of nothing – ‘When neither Śūnya nor Niśśūnya was, Śaraṇa arose’. This is taken not only from the Rġvēda X.129.1 but also from Ćhāndōgyōpaniṣad VI.2.1. Furthermore Taittirīyōpaniṣad II.7 says ‘In the beginning there was indeed Non-being; from that, verily, the Being sprang out.

**Saṃsārahēyasthala:** In Saṃsārahēyasthala one develops disgust for the worldly life of cycle of births and deaths, and detaches from the transient worldly pleasures by virtue of refined impressions.

Saṃsāra is the cycle of births and deaths. The Upaniṣads’ main point of teaching is that one has to break this cycle and attain immortality; they teach how to detach from these transient worldly pleasures and passions, and advance further in one’s spiritual attainment.

The seventh vaċana of Śūnyasaṃpāḁane explains that the soul not knowing its true nature plunges into Māyā (delusion) and identifies with the body; as a consequence the individual becomes fond of pleasures and passions associated with the body, and thus the individual is not in a position to realize the Divine presence. Here Śūnyasaṃpāḁane quotes Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇōpaniṣad III.6 which says something like – ‘Having focused the thought on the body, one finds pleasure and pain associated with the body’.

The ninth vaċana states that a common person believes that the birth is the beginning and the death is the end and that that is all there is to life; and that darkness has covered the three worlds. Varāhōpaniṣad II.12 is given as reference which says something like ‘Karma having attributes is of the form of darkness and ignorance, but it does not affect the self-resplendent Ātman’ (37).

The eleventh vaċana says that the human beings with perishable bodies harbor instinctive cravings (vāsanās), and that those who are caught in them cannot realize God. Referenced Mahōpaniṣad V.86 says ‘This world tied with the thread of temptations/vāsanās moves frequently in the cycle of birth and death’ (37).

The twelfth vaċana is explained to mean that Jīva the individual soul owns the body and revels in the enjoyment of sense objects through the sense organs, and therefore is in the grip of Māyā; but Īśvara is the Lord of Māyā, and when the individual realizes Īśvara to be one’s own Self, the play of duality ceases and the oneness is attained. The referenced Yōgāċūdāmaṇyōpaniṣad 84 says something like ‘The sensory organs tie the Jīva in bondage but cannot fasten the Ātman; as long as affection remains, the Jīva exists in bondage, but when the ties of affection are removed, the Jīva is liberated’ (37). Śvetāśvatarōpaniṣad IV.10-11 says that Prakṛti is Māyā, and Mahēśvara is the Lord of Māyā; one has to realize that the self-effulgent presides over all the various aspects of Prakṛti and that the universe dissolves in it and appears in manifold forms in it; this realization results in the one attaining infinite peace.

The fifteenth vaċana is explained like this: 'Jīva is driven by a compelling passion for worldly pleasures. This thirst is not satisfied by enjoyment. The more one tries to appease the sense organs and the senses, the more dissatisfied one becomes. The referenced Nāradaparivrājakōpaniṣad III.37 says like this 'Lust when enjoyed is never gratified; just as fire increases with pouring of ghee/clarified-butter into it, so also lust waxes strong with enjoyment' (37).

**Māyāvilāsaviḍambana-sthala:** In Māyāvilāsaviḍambana-sthala the individual-self Jīva recognizes its identity to be one and the same as that of the Universal-Self. Jīva has to rid itself of Māyā by recognizing that the Self is different from Māyā and that the play of Māyā is working against the realization of the Self. In order to achieve this, one has to have a pure mind which is devoid of any restless activity, and has to have a clear consciousness. Stabilization of the mind is of prime importance so that one can then proceed on to contemplation and meditation in one's spiritual progress.

The eighteenth vaċana of Śūnyasaṃpādane is an enigmatic vaċana as are many other vaċanas of Prabhudēva. It is explained as follows. The universe is a show. The phenomenal play within the universe is a show in a show. Brahma is the creator of the universe, but the work of Brahma disappears when real knowledge dawns. The phenomenal play within the universe is false; and when pure 'Sat' which corresponds to Viṣṇu is realized, the phenomena disappear in suṣupti, the deep-sleep stage of Rudra. These three correspond to the three states of consciousness, namely, waking consciousness, dream consciousness and the deep-sleep consciousness. But the real Self-consciousness transcends these three states and abides in its native glory. This state described in the vaċana as 'the reflection of a rootless tree mirrored in a waterless shadow' exactly coincides with the description of the fourth state of consciousness or Turīya avastā. In Turīya there are no traces of roots of the world tree because it is beyond the reach of all dualities and relativities. This Turīya consciousness is reflected in a pure mind which is devoid of restless activity. When pure mind and clear consciousness are identified, the silence reigns supreme. All of this is described in Māṇḍūkyaōpaniṣad, the essence of which is - The Turīya is transcendental, devoid of all phenomenal existence, and '**Śiva advaita**' the 'Supreme Bliss of Non-duality'. The actual term Śiva-advaita is used in the Upaniṣad (see 'Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad' in the 'Major Upaniṣads' article).

The nineteenth vaċana is again another enigmatic vaċana. It states as follows. On the tip of a horn of a male buffalo there are 770 wells; each well contains a spring; in that spring, Prabhudēva says he sees a harlot with 770 elephants crawling around her neck. The Śūnyasaṃpādane explains the vaċana as follows. The buffalo is the embodied individual-self Jīva; the 770 wells refer to 770 nāḍis in the body; an nāḍi is a pathway/conduit/channel through which the life-energy courses through; the springs refer to the nectar-like fluid released by the energized nāḍis; harlot is the Divine-energy Kuṇḍalini that is dormant deep down in the base of the body the Mūlādhāra; Kuṇḍalini gets activated during breath-control; the elephants represent arrogance and insolence

(see 'Prāṇa and Kuṇḍalini article). The functioning of some of the main nāḍis is in many Upaniṣads - Taittirīyōpaniṣad I.6, Kaṭhōpaniṣad VI.16, Praśnōpaniṣad III.6, Muṇḍakōpaniṣad II.2.6, and other Upaniṣads.

The twenty-third vācāna says as follows. The marvelous body is made of the combining together of bhūtas/elements – five mahābhūtas are earth, water, fire, wind and ether/sky/cosmos; when one forgets one's own real nature and identifies with the body, the fire of knowledge is extinguished, resulting in the mind enviously craving for possessions of others; the life, mind, and intellect remain impure and agitated so long as the stillness of the Jīva is not attained. The referenced Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad II.27 is like this 'The organ of mind is dominated by its object, the desire, because one enviously desires what one does not have that others possess'.

Then there is this vācāna, the twenty-ninth, in which Prabhudēva explains the whole process of self-realization. Using metaphor, he suggests that one should cultivate the Supreme as a garden. He states that he has made his body a garden. Using his mind as a spade, he has broken up the illusion's weeds – rooted out Brān̄thi/delusion; has broken up the clods of worldly-life; has cultivated the earth and sown Brahma's seed. His Sahasrāra, the thousand-petalled lotus located at the top of the brain is his well, and his breath is his water-wheel. He channels water through Suṣumnā nāḍi, the central channel, to irrigate the garden. To keep out the five Bulls of senses, so as to prevent them trampling the crops, he sets up all around the garden patience and poise as a fence. And he has lain awake night and day to protect his tender plants.

This intense vācāna makes several points. The body is to be emptied out of its earthliness. The discriminating power of the mind is to be used to root-out the delusions. Breath-control is to be practiced to nurture spirituality and devotion. Using patience and poise, all sensory input is to be disengaged in order to stabilize the mind so that the mind can be directed to carryout the function of contemplation and meditation (see 'Body Breath and Mind, and the Inner-Self' and 'Prāṇa and Kuṇḍalini' articles). It is to be pointed out that stabilization of the mind is of prime importance so that one can then proceed on to contemplation and meditation in one's spiritual progress.

[Liṅgadhāraṇasthala](#) is the last of the preliminary sthalas given in Śūnyasaṃpādane. It is said to be an essential step in the preparation for the ensuing Bhaktasthala (1).

Prose sections and the vācānas 30 to 55 in Śūnyasaṃpādane (1) describe this sthala. First is the aspect of the Guru. Prabhudēva describes his encounter with Animiṣa whom he considers as his Guru. Animiṣa is in a trance with his un-winking eyes focused on the Iṣṭaliṅga on his palm, and can not interact with Prabhudēva for the physical process of initiation, therefore, the initiation takes place only through the mental process effected through mere will. This type of mental process of initiation, the Jñānaliṅgōpadēśakrama is meant only for the ones who are at a higher plane of consciousness and are well advanced in their spiritual attainment.



The other type of initiation involving the physical process is said to be for the ordinary aspirants who are in a lower plane of consciousness. This physical process is carried out by the Guru. It involves rites and rituals such as besmearing the body with sacred ash, placing the palm on the disciple's head, whispering the mantra into the disciple's ear, and investing the Iṣṭaliṅga on the seeker's palm.

Guru is a master of spiritual knowledge who has realized the state of identity with Liṅga. Guru instills spiritual knowledge into the disciple. An aspirant who yearns for self-realization is impelled to seek a competent Guru; it is the awareness of Gurubhāva in the disciple. The seeking and striving of the disciple goes on until the aspirant reaches the spiritual that takes the form of Liṅga.

This is from the Muṇḍakōpaniṣad I.2.12-13 which says something like 'to procure the knowledge, one should, with proper attitude, go to the **Guru** (the actual word 'guru' is used in the Upaniṣad) who is well-versed in the scriptures and established in the Brahman. To such a seeker whose mind is peaceful and controlled, the learned Guru imparts the knowledge of Brahman in its very essence, the knowledge by which one knows the true Imperishable Being'.

The process of initiation performed by the Guru is said to accomplish the following. The abstract form of Liṅga is the formulated grace of the Guru. It descends from above into the disciple. It forces its way from the mental (Bhāva) to the vital (Prāṇa) and from the vital to the physical. In its passage it purifies the mind and makes it into Bhāvaliṅga, purifies the life/prāṇa into Prāṇaliṅga, and purifies the body and appears on the palm of the disciple as the symbol of the Divine, the Iṣṭaliṅga. Prabhudēva explains it as follows. That which is greater than the greatest, itself, becomes Guru the Preceptor, Liṅga the Principle, Jaṅgama the person, Vidyā the knowledge, Prasāda the peace, Mantra the power and Yantra the bliss. Hence love, knowledge, power, bliss and peace are the radiant expressions of the Divine. With this Divine descent, the person is passion-free. The Guru is Prāṇaliṅga the light of consciousness that dwells in the heart, and by the grace of Guru, the cycle of births and deaths ceases. Prāṇaliṅga is said to represent the vital consciousness with inseparable energy and awareness in it.

This is from Kaṭhōpaniṣad II.20 which says something like 'Ātman, smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest, is lodged in the heart of the individuals. The individual, who has relinquished all desires, thus being free from grief, realizes the glory of Ātman through the Guru's grace (the compound word 'Dhātuprasāda' is used here; 'Dhātr' usually means 'the creator')'.

This mere sight of God is not enough to be united with the God. The seeker must then ascend in six stages to attain oneness.

**Bhaktasthala:** In Bhaktasthala the disciple understands that the light of knowledge shines by means of Bhakti/devotion. The seeker develops intense devotion to attain this knowledge. Devotee's daily life includes worship of Liṅga in the morning, performing dedicated work, serving the community and treating everyone with respect and humility. Worship of Liṅga, unconditional service to Guru and dāsōha/self-dedication to Jaṅgama are the principal features of this stage.

Bhakti is devotion. It is said in the discussion part of Kēnōpaniṣad (page 10 of reference # 25) that devotion is of two types. The first type is the devotion that is an expression of the knowledge of unity. This type of devotion is practiced by the wise who already have realized the 'unity'. The realization is that, one's own-Self and the God adored as the creator of the universe, are the manifestations of the same basic reality that is Brahman. In the state of relative consciousness, one adores God in ecstatic love (Prēmabhakti); this is identical with the Knowledge. Thus one exhibits Divine expression of love, knowledge, power, bliss, and peace. (This type of devotion/worship is exhibited after Aikyasthala.) The other type of devotion is the devotion that leads to that knowledge. In this type of devotion the aspirant has not attained the knowledge of unity, and therefore can not yet express it. Thus the devotion is a matter of faith and not of expression. To attain that knowledge, the devotee worships God externally; it stimulates Divine love that rouses Ātman-consciousness. Bhaktasthala is about this second type of devotion, the devotion that leads to the attainment of the knowledge of unity.

The above discussion comes about for the explanation of Kēnōpaniṣad I.5-9 mantras. In the five verses, the Upaniṣad seems to criticize the second type of devotion of the common people by repeatedly saying 'What senses of speech, mind, sight, hearing and smell can not reveal, but what reveals these senses (Ātman), that alone is Brahman, and not this that people here worship' (the Upaniṣad uses the term 'upāsate' for worship). This seems to be to discourage the worship of minor deities for the purpose of gaining worldly blessings. The Kēnōpaniṣad then in IV.6 says 'Brahman is well known as Tadvana; all beings love Tadvana; and so Brahman is to be meditated/worshipped as Tadvana'. Here the Upaniṣad redeems itself, and accepts the second type of devotion, because the worship of one Deity immanent in all is always desirable as the best means of progress in spiritual life (page 41 of reference # 25). Vīraśaivas believe that 'Tadvana' is another name for 'Śiva' (see 'Kēna Upaniṣad' in 'Major Upaniṣads' article), and that Bhaktasthala exemplifies this second type of devotion which is a matter of faith.

Furthermore, Kēnōpaniṣad IV.8 says something like 'Austerity, restraint, and dedicated work are the three means to that end, and as such, are included in the Upaniṣad'. Bhaktasthala teaches one to incorporate austerity, restraint and dedicated work in one's daily life.

Mantra II.7 of Śvetāśvatarōpaniṣad says that one should be devoted to that ancient Brahman - towards the Immanent Soul conceived as the Prime Cause. This mantra uses the term '*juṣēta*' for 'should be devoted to', and does not use the term '*bhakti*'. Explanation for this passage on page 45 of reference # 34 is as follows. The Absolute is

beyond thought and speech, and cannot be the subject of devotion. Devotion requires the duality of devotee (bhakta) and the Divine (Bhagavān). Therefore to approach the unity of the Absolute through some best possible form of devotion is that towards the immanent Ātman conceived as the Prime Cause, whose presence is felt by all devotees in their hearts. Because the Absolute cannot be the subject of devotion and cannot be devoted to directly, one has to conceive the concept of the Creator and show devotion to the Prime Cause.

This aspect of Bhakta and Dēva has been brought up in Śūnyasāmpādane. Prabhudēva, in one of his vaċanas, recognizing the intense devotion exhibited by Basavaṇṇa, wonders how Basavaṇṇa can be united with the Liṅga without losing the name and fence that divide the Divine and the devotee. Bhakti is love of God or devotion. However, Vīraśaiva sadbhakti has a special significance. It means right love, true love or real love. It is also termed Śivādvaita bhakti. In Vīraśaivism, the love of the enlightened individual is directed towards one's own Real Self. This is considered superior to even Mōkṣa/salvation (pages 357-358 of volume II of reference 1). According to the Vīraśaiva Philosophy, Dēva and Bhakta are not two different entities, but two different names of the One Indivisible Reality (page 373 of volume II of reference 1).

**Māhēśvarasthala:** In Māhēśvarasthala the devotee understands that one who wavers and entertains the desire for another god or gods is neither brave nor resolute, and thus, the devotee develops steadfastness of faith in Liṅga. Māhēśvara clears the eight-fold taints of earth, water, fire, air, sky, moon, sun and ego, and intensifies the worship of Liṅga (see 'Body Breath and Mind, and the Inner Self' article). Removal of doubt and misgivings, and development of full confidence in Liṅga worship, enhances the depth of devotion. As devotion becomes intense, rites and rituals are dispensed with, and only the internal worship is developed. The silent contemplation of the Divine remains the only yearning.

Śvetāśvatarōpaṇiṣad mantras III.1-2 speak of the oneness of the Ultimate Reality despite its apparent diversity in functions, and imply that only this Reality is to be known – 'One who exists alone during the time of creation and dissolution of the universe, by virtue of Its inscrutable Power assumes manifold powers, and appears as the Divine Lord who protects all the worlds and controls all the forces working there off. He – Rudra – is indeed one only; there is no one beside Him to make him the second. After projecting and maintaining all the worlds, He finally withdraws them into Himself. O people, He is present inside the hearts of all beings. One who worships Him only, and realizes this Being, becomes immortal' (34).

**Prasādisthala:** In Prasādisthala one dedicates oneself as the offering to the Divine. One, who, by offering the body, mind and will, to Guru, Liṅga and Jaṅgama, has achieved purity of the body (śuddha), clarity of the mind (siddha) and perfection of the will (prasiddha), that one is the partaker of the grace of the Divine that is Prasāda. Everything is offered with a sense of self-dedication and self-surrender. The offerings are to be free from any taint; if attachment or craving persists, the transformation to Prasāda will not

be effected. When ignorance and the sense of ego are completely eliminated, and the offering is made with sincerity and humility, Prasāda ensues, and poise and peace are attained by the devotee. Serenity is a characteristic of the Prasādi. Thus, when it is offered properly, the fire of knowledge burns the illusion of desire into an illumination of joy.

In Ćhāndōgyōpaniṣad VII.26.2, there is some implication of the Prasāda without using the term 'Prasāda'. Part of the mantra is something like this 'One who sees this (that everything springs from Ātman), sees all things and obtains all things in all ways. When nourishment is purified (*āhārasuddhi*), reflection and understanding become pure. When reflection and understanding are purified, memory becomes strong; and when memory has become strong, all the knots of the heart become untied' (32). The phrase 'knots of the heart' occurs frequently in the Upaniṣads; it stands for ignorance, desire, passion and such, which frustrate the dawn of knowledge (page 77 of reference # 28).

Kaṭhōpaniṣad II.20 says something like 'Ātman, smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest, is lodged in the heart of the individuals. The individual, who has relinquished all desires, thus being free from grief, realizes the glory of Ātman through the Guru's grace (the compound word '*Dhātuprasāda*' is used here; 'Dhātṛ' usually means 'the creator')'.

Śvetāśvatarōpaniṣad III.20 is same as the one above; it says something like 'subtler than the subtlest and greater than the greatest, the Ātman is hidden in the heart of all. By the grace of the Creator (*Dhātuḥ prasāda*), one becomes free from sorrows and desires, and then realizes the great Īśa'. Then mantra VI.21 specifically states '*Dēvaprasāda*' meaning 'grace of God'. Sage Śvetāśvatara by the power of self-control and concentration of mind, and by the grace of God realized Brahman. He expounded it to the highest order of Saṅnyāsins who then resorted to the truth of that supremely holy Brahman.

**Prāṅgaliṅgīsthala:** In Prāṅgaliṅgīsthala self-experience is the main characteristic. Breath-control and meditation performed by the seeker activates the vital-force that permeates the whole body. The seeker experiences vivid impressions of light, sound and taste. When the Divine-energy gets activated and moves through the nervous system, a peerless peace wells out, and external world is kept at abeyance; Prāṅgaliṅgī sees one's own Self permeating the whole universe (see 'Prāṅgā and Kuṅḍalini' article).

Aitarēyōpaniṣad III.1 explains the mahāvākya, the great saying, 'Prajñānam Brahma', meaning 'exalted actual self-experience alone is Brahman', or 'the thought itself is Brahman', or 'the Supreme Knowledge is Brahman', or simply 'Pure Consciousness is Brahman' (see 'Aitarēya Upaniṣad' in 'Major Upaniṣads' article). The Self-experience of Prāṅgaliṅgī, seeing one's own Self permeating the whole universe, is 'Prajñānam Brahma', but the Prāṅgaliṅgī has not yet become the Knowledge itself.

In one of the vaṅanas of Prāṅgaliṅgīsthala, Prabhudēva states that the unchanging Divinity is present everywhere, in the minutest of particles of dust, in the hard wood or tender

blade of grass. Śūnyasaṃpādane (1) again quotes Kaṭhōpaniṣad II.20 which says 'Ātman, smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest, is lodged in the heart of the individuals. The individual, who has relinquished all desires, thus becoming free from grief, realizes the glory of Ātman through the purity of senses and mind' (26).

The Prāṇaliṅgīsthala vācānas mention several aspects of what happens during breath-control and meditation. Details are given in the article 'Prāṇa and Kuṇḍalini' in this book.

In the vācānas, the body is referred to as the City of Śiva and a nine-door shrine, the nine-doors being – two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth, genitor-urinary opening, and anus. Śvetāśvatarōpaniṣad III.18 says Haṃsa (Soul) resides in the body of nine gates, and is the master of the whole world, animate and non-animate. Haṃsa literally means swan, here it is used to mean the Soul. Kaṭhōpaniṣad V.1 speaks of the city of the unborn (Ātman), referring to the body which is said to have eleven gates – the above nine doors, and the umbilicus/navel and Brahmarandhra/Brāhmic-fissure at the top of the head. Ćhāndōgyōpaniṣad VIII.1.1 speaks about the City of Brahman, again referring to the body; and speaks of a mansion in it in the shape of a lotus referring to the heart-lotus, the Anāhata, which is one of the seven energy-centers or ĉakras in the body.

The vācānas mention three of the seven energy-centers/lotuses/ĉakras, namely, Mūlasthāna or Ādhāra, Madhya or Anāhata, and Ādi or Sahasrāra. Many Upaniṣads mention these centers, but the sixth mantra of Haṃsōpaniṣad gives all seven energy-centers together in an order (37).

The vācānas mention Suṣumnā nāḍi, the main central channel/conduit/pathway that conducts vital-force in the body; this has been described in many Upaniṣads as mentioned in the Māyāvīlāsaviḍāmbanasthala above.

**Śaraṇasthala:** In Śaraṇasthala experiencing of pure delight by the seeker as a result of deep and continued meditation is the main feature. Experiences of Prāṇaliṅgīsthala in the form of intermittent flashes and streams of sensations are replaced in Śaraṇasthala by the Self seeing its own form shining in Divine splendor. Remembrance of work-a-day world is gone, illusion of will is burnt, awareness of the body is forgotten, and all external phenomena have crumbled, and all this is replaced by a serene mood. There is no motion of any kind, the mind is stilled, and individual consciousness is overcome. The empirical knowledge resolves into supra-mental knowledge, and the sense of duality is replaced by the knowledge of significance of the Union. The seeker experiences Ānanda/bliss.

One of the Śaraṇasthala vācānas states that all memory is dead, all error burnt, awareness forgotten, all symbols have crumbled, there is no motion for the body, and the mind is stilled. This is compared to a mantra in Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad IV.3.21 which says something like '...As a man fully embraced by his dear lady knows nothing external or internal, in the same manner, the individual-self Jīvātman fully embraced by the Pure Consciousness of the Supreme-Self Paramātman knows nothing external or internal...'

(33).

One of the *vaċanas* states that there is a head above another head, and that the head above swallows the head below. These two heads refer to two kinds of knowledge – a higher knowledge and a lower knowledge. This is a very important concept. *Muṇḍakōpaniṣad* I.1.4-5, in answering a question 'What is that by knowing which everything becomes known?' says 'There are two kinds of knowledge that are to be acquired. One is a lower knowledge, and the other is a higher knowledge. The lower knowledge consists of the study of the *Vēdas* and everything else that is attained through the senses. The higher knowledge is that by which the Absolute is attained'. In *Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad* II.4.12, *Yājñavalkya*, the composer of *Śukla Yajurvēda*, in continuing to teach his wife *Maitrēyī* says 'As a lump of salt thrown into water dissolves in it and whichever part of water sampled has only the saline taste, so also the great, endless, infinite Reality is only homogeneous Intelligence. On account of the elements of the body, the individual-self stands out separately, but as soon as these elements are destroyed, the separate existence of the individual consciousness is also destroyed. After attaining the higher Knowledge, there is no separate existence'.

One of the *vaċanas* says that where the conditioned or unconditioned mind stops and stillness reigns, where consciousness of being oneself reaches an end, there ecstasy/*ānanda* dwells, and one beholds the light of the *Liṅga* as a resplendent blaze. *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* VI.11 says something like 'Firm control of the senses and fixing the mind in contemplation is known as *Yōga*. The person who performs the *Yōga*, the *yōgin*, must not allow the mind to wander from object to object by inefficient control of the mind, but must make the mind steady in concentration; the *yōgin* then becomes free from the vagueness of the mind'. And then in V.13-14 the *Upaniṣad* says 'The wise who perceive the eternal, the intelligence in the intelligent, as existing within their own self, to them belongs eternal peace, and to none else. The sages perceive that indescribable Joy of the Supreme as 'this is that'' (26). *Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad* VII.23.1 says 'That which is Infinite is alone happiness' (33).

*Aikyasthala* is characterized by a state of only one consciousness where there is no volition, no motion, no word or speech, and where all consciousness of time and space is suspended. There is no separate consciousness of the individual. In this Supra-Conscious state, the one has reached true Reality – It is indescribable, and the great white light is everywhere. Here the Self is absorbed in the intense and focused meditation on the transcendent passing over the limits of mind and entering into the ecstatic state. *Prabhudēva* advocates *Nirvikalpa Samādhī* where the super-consciousness state is completely devoid of any psychic residue or mental deposits. This Supreme state is not conscious of anything. Somewhat of a lower type is the *Savikalpa Samādhī* where there is some retention of the self-volition when absorbed into the super-conscious state.

An *Aikya* is described as – the knower of the truth, has become immortal, is sublime and of the most-high, has attained Bliss, is an inhabitant of the Void, and perfect and serene.

Muṇḍakōpaniṣad III.2.8-9 says something like 'As flowing rivers lose name and form when they disappear in the ocean, even so the wise one free from name and form goes into the highest of the high – the Supreme Divinity. Whoever knows the Supreme Brahman becomes the very Brahman'. Taittirīyōpaniṣad II.1 has a similar statement 'one who realizes Brahman attains the Supreme' (30). Somewhat similar statement is in Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad IV.4.6 which says something like 'Being attached together with work attains that on which 'Liṅga' or 'mind' is set...But one who has no craving, whose only object of desire is the Self, being Brahman itself, merges in Brahman'. It is said that 'Liṅga' means 'index', but here it is used to mean the subtle body, and also mind here means subtle body (33).

Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad, in II.3.1-6 states that Brahman has only two limiting adjuncts superimposed on It through ignorance – gross and subtle forms. The gross form is that which is earth, water and fire (other than air and sky), it is mortal, limited and perceptible; its essence is the solar orb of the shining sun, not the deity of the sun. The subtle form is the corporeal air and sky, is immortal, unlimited, imperceptible, and its essence is this principle, the subtle body that is the right eye, for it is the essence of those two elements (air and sky) of the body. But the specification about Brahman is '**not this, not this**', eliminating not only the two limiting adjuncts, gross and subtle forms stated above, but also all possible specification about Brahman. There is no other or better specification than 'not this, not this'. Its sacred name is Truth of truth. The vital-force is truth, and It is the Truth of that (33).

Although the Bṛhadāraṇyakōpaniṣad says that there is no other specification about Brahman, other than 'not this, not this', the Upaniṣads accept only three positive specifications about Brahman – **Sat, Ćit, and Ānanda** – Being or eternal existence, consciousness or pure knowledge, and infinite Bliss. Nirvikalpa Samādhi is the attainment of this **Saĉĉidānanda**.

Having gone through the spiritual hierarchy of Ṣaṭsthala, the seeker has attained oneness. This attainment while still alive is the liberation in life called Jīvanmukti.

**Jaṅgamasthala:** Śūnyasaṁpādane describes Jaṅgamasthala as the ultimate sthala. Having attained the Absolute through Ṣaṭsthala, the one has become a Jaṅgama. Jaṅgama is a Jīvanmukta, the one liberated in life. Although liberated from the cycle of births and deaths, Jaṅgama still has the body. Wearing the body as garment, Jaṅgama continues to serve humanity. The Jaṅgama is described as the one with leg-less walk, hand-less touch, and mouth-less taste, and as having the feeling as a bowl in order to request earnestly for the Supreme alms, not ordinary alms but the unreserved surrender to the Supreme. Jaṅgama moves for the redemption of mankind, and blesses the aspirants by mere will. With illumined knowledge and enlightened action, the great one acts as a source of Divine Grace.



Many Upaniṣads describe the process of attainment of the Jīvanmukti state, but very few describe the Jīvanmukta. However the Paramahaṁsa Upaniṣad is wholly dedicated to describing the Jīvanmukta without using that title, and calling Jīvanmukta as Paramahaṁsa (see 'Paramahamsōpaniṣad' in the 'Minor Upaniṣads' article). The Paramahaṁsa is described there as a recluse with minimal interaction with the community. However it is to be pointed out that even though Jaṅgama is a Jīvanmukta/Paramahaṁsa, the Jaṅgama concept of the Vīraśaivas is much more than the Jīvanmukta or the Paramahaṁsa concept of the Upaniṣads. Jaṅgama is Śiva on the move, and is much more involved in the spiritual advancement of the community, rather than being a recluse as the Paramahaṁsa is.



## Smṛti

There is a multitude of smṛti texts. The main scriptures that come under smṛti are the Itihāsas, Purāṇas and Dharma Śāstras. Itihāsa means 'verily it happened thus' and means that it was composed as it happened. The two great epics, Rāmāyaṇa, and Mahābhārata which includes Bhagavad-Gītā, are the Itihāsas. Purāṇa means 'history having the origin in the distant past'. The original Purāṇa which is mentioned in the early Vēdic literature is not available now. Eighteen post-Vēdic principal Purāṇas and another 18 secondary Purāṇas are available. Dharma-śāstras are the so-called Law-books (4, 5). There are eighteen Śāstras named after the ṛṣis who compiled them (4). Duties of different categories of individuals, duties of kings, auspicious ceremonies, laws of inheritance and marriage, criminal justice, examination of a witness, and such issues are given in these law books. The most famous Dharma-śāstra is the Manu-smṛti.

**More details of the Smṛti texts are in Part III of this book; please refer to it.**

## Bhagavad-Gītā

Bhagavadgītā means 'song of God', and it is sometimes simply referred to as 'The Gītā', 'The Song'. Bhagavadgītā is the most popular of all the Hindu scriptures. It occupies a special place in the School of Vēdānta, representing one of the three authoritative works on Vēdānta known as *prasthāna-traya*, the other two being the Upaniṣads and the Brahma-sūtras (2). Its sublime and the universal teaching, appeals to everyone. The fundamentals of the Vēdic philosophy are in the Upaniṣads, and the essence of the Upaniṣads is the Bhagavadgītā. Most of what follows in this article is taken from two Bhagavadgītā books referenced here (43, 44).

Bhagavadgītā is a treatise on the Reality called Brahman. This Reality has three categories. The Immanent Reality is the phenomenal universe. It is the abode of all living beings. It serves as a divinely devised training ground where, through pain and pleasure, and through life and death, all beings are driven to evolve in the Divinity. The Transcendental Reality is Īśvara who contains controls and governs the Immanent Reality. All worship and adoration are offered to this Reality. Īśvara bestows emancipation to those who perfect themselves. It is said that Īśvara is embodied in Kṛṣṇa for the benefit of the devotees. The substratum of these two categories of Reality is the Absolute Reality which is also called Nirguṇa Brahman or Pure Consciousness. The goal of human life is to dissolve one's individuality into this Cosmic Awareness – *Prajñāna* - that is Brahman.

The process by which one regains one's identity with Brahman is through **Yōga**. Bhagavadgītā is a manual of the science of Yōga and its different paths. The emphasis in Bhagavadgītā is on the Karma Yōga, the path of non-selfish action. This is somewhat of

a departure from the Upaniṣadic teaching that prefers the path of Jñāna Yōga, the path of discriminative Knowledge. This may be because the Upaniṣads were geared specifically to those already free from social obligations – the forest dwellers and the hermits, where as the Bhagavadgītā is intended for the society at large, the Karma Yōga being relevant to the householder as well as to the monastic (2).

Bhagavad-Gītā is composed as a dialog in a dialog. The inner dialog is between Divine Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the battle field of Kurukṣētra. Arjuna is one of the Pāṇḍavas, and Kṛṣṇa is his chariot driver (see 'Smṛti' and 'Vyāsa' articles). The Kurukṣētra battlefield is said to be analogous to the human body where both good and bad are utilized to serve its purpose. The life lived on earth is a conflict between the good and the bad, and although the bad are more in number the good ultimately triumphs.

Bhagavadgītā begins with the *Gītā Dhyānam* which means 'Meditation on Gītā'. This meditation has seven verses. The fourth one says something like this: All the Upaniṣads are the cows, the one who milks the cows is Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna is the calf, people of intellect are the drinkers, and the milk is the supreme nectar of the Gītā. It basically says that Bhagavadgītā is the essence of the Upaniṣads. Furthermore, in the colophon at the end of each chapter, The Bhagavadgītā refers to itself as an Upaniṣad – 'In the Upaniṣad of Bhagavad-Gītā, the knowledge of Brahman, the Science of Yoga ...'

The main part of Bhagavadgītā has 700 verses which are distributed into 18 chapters. The first chapter is entitled 'The Despondency of Arjuna'. Kṛṣṇa's main teaching starts in the second chapter in response to the despondency of Arjuna who does not want to engage in battle against his own kith and kin.

For more details, please refer to the electronic publication "Bhagavad-Gītā an Abridged English Rendering", published by the Veeraśaiva Samaja of North America.

## Bhagavad-Gītā References in Śūnyasāmpādane

Bhagavad-Gītā is the essence of what is in the Upaniṣads. Most of the Viraśaiva concepts are from the Upaniṣads. Therefore, Bhagavad-Gītā is a good referral source for the Viraśaiva concepts.

The Viraśaivas have devised a practical way of achieving Oneness, with a common person in mind. The attainment of Oneness is within reach of anyone whether it is a man or a woman, or of any caste or creed, and it is not a monopoly of a chosen few. This concept is exemplified in Bhagavad-Gītā: Verse IX.32 says 'for those who take refuge in the Blessed Lord, though of inferior birth – such as women, Vaiśyas and Śūdras – even they attain the Supreme'; and in verses XVIII.41 to 46, the Gītā says something like this 'to whatever caste one may belong, zealous performance of one's duty will lead one to the ultimate goal'.

The Śūnyasāmpādane book (1) quotes eight Bhagavad-Gītā verses to explain some of the vācānas contained in there. Those references are as follows.

The first reference to Bhagavad-Gītā comes in the explanation of Prabhudēva's vācāna in Māyāvilāsaviḍāmbana-sthala in Śūnyasāmpādane. It is the stage when the play of Māyā is held up to ridicule. The vācāna is a complex one, and it is said that it conveys this meaning – 'So long as the ignorant Jīva (individual self) is caught in the clutches of Kāla (time), Kāma (lust) and Karma (law of cause and effect of actions), the Jīva is unable to realize its own nature, its real identity'. The vācāna implies that Jīva has to rid itself of Māyā by recognizing that the Self is different from Māyā and that the play of Māyā is working against the Self.

The referenced Bhagavad-Gītā verse VII.15 is as follows – 'The evil doers, the ignorant and the lowest persons whose intellect has been deprived of its discrimination by Māyā, do not worship or seek refuge in the Blessed Lord'.

The next reference is in the Liṅgadhāraṇasthala in the following context. While Animiṣa was in complete trance, gazing at the Iṣṭaliṅga on his palm, and not physically able to give Dīkṣā (initiation), Prabhudēva picks up the Iṣṭaliṅga from Animiṣa's palm. At that instant there is Divine descent into the mind, life and body of Prabhudēva (meaning that Prabhudēva instantly receives Dīkṣā from Animiṣa), and Animiṣa attains Śūnya with his body falling to the ground. Prabhudēva consoles himself by realizing that Animiṣa has not perished, but has attained the Absolute. In this context, part of the vācāna says 'for the Real Unborn, there is no death'.

The referenced Bhagavad-Gītā verse II.20 is as follows – 'The Ātman is neither born nor does it die, and having come into being It does not cease to exist. It is unborn, eternal, constant and ancient. It does not die when the body dies'.

Context for the next reference is as follows. When Prabhudēva encounters intensely grieving Mukṭāyī upon her brother Ajagaṇṇa's death, he tells her that mourning in the case of Ajagaṇṇa is not right. Part of this vaṇcāna says that her grief seems sorrow-less and her lamentation seems to be without grief.

The referenced verse II.11 is something like this 'The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead'. The reason is as above 'Ātman does not die when the body dies'.

Then there is this encounter with the great Śivayōgi Siddharāma. It is the vaṇcāna of Siddharāma that is being explained. Siddharāma admits his mistake in not recognizing the greatness of Prabhudēva at that encounter, and surrenders to Prabhudēva.

The referenced verse XVIII.62 says something like 'Seek refuge in Him with all your heart. By His grace you will gain Supreme Peace and the Eternal Abode'.

Next reference is again for Siddharāma's vaṇcāna. This is in response to Prabhudēva saying that the Knowledge of Reality destroys the Sañcīta Karma that merely stays accumulated, and also prevents Āgāmi Karma that is being gathered in this life (the effects of Prārabdha Karma are being experienced in this life and cannot be changed). Siddharāma, in his defense, says that his yōga is a process wherein one stage follows another, and thus it is necessary that he perform his deeds.

The referenced Bhagavad-Gītā verse V.11 is like this 'For self-purification, the Yōgi, abandoning attachment, performs work with the body, the mind, the intellect and the senses only'. Here, because the Yōgi does not seek fruit for his action, his body is merely performing action without gathering any Karma.

Another reference for Siddharāma's vaṇcāna comes during his discussion with Prabhudēva. The vaṇcāna means something like 'lust is the root cause of imprisonment in the body, anger is the root cause of clinging to life, and greed is the root cause of attachment to the all-embracing world of senses'.

In support of this vaṇcāna, Bhagavad-Gītā verse XVI.12 is quoted. It comes in the context of description of people with demonic qualities, and says some thing like this 'Bound by a hundred ties of desire, and enslaved by lust and anger, they strive by unjust means to hoard wealth for sensual enjoyment'.

The next explanation is for Mōḷige Mārayya's vaṇcāna which goes something like this 'If one goes to heaven by virtue of devotion or meritorious deeds, after enjoying the fruits of those deeds, one returns to this world. But Basavaṇṇa and other great bhaktas, knowing this, did not go in that path; they attained the highest state here and now'.

The referenced Bhagavad-Gītā verse IX.21 tells about the knowers of the three Vēdas

and performers of Yajñas (sacrifices) who go to heaven. Having enjoyed the vast world of heaven, they return to this world of mortals on the exhaustion of their merits; thus abiding by the injunction of the three Vēdas, desiring objects of desires, they go and come.

The last referral comes in context of the discussion between Prabhudēva and Akka Mahādēvi. It is about Prabhudēva's vaĉana which says something like 'The body, the bones and the senses are all filled with lust, anger and greed. The god of love is lust, and it is to be subdued'.

Two Bhagavad-Gītā verses II.62-63 are referred to here. 'One develops attachment to the senses by constantly thinking about them; from that attachment desire comes; from desire anger sprouts forth; from anger proceeds delusion; from delusion comes confused memory; from confused memory comes the ruin of reason; and due to ruin of reason the person perishes'.

Although Bhagavad-Gītā has been sparingly referred to and quoted here, it is a good source of reference for Vīraśaivas, because it is the essence of the Upaniṣads from where most of the Vīraśaiva concepts have arisen.

## Dharśana

Dharśana scriptures are not included in the śruti or smṛti texts, but are included in a separate category. Dharśanas are the six Philosophical Systems that are based on the Vēdas. The Dharśana scriptures are called Dharma-Sūtras. Sūtra is an aphorism with minimal use of words to project a thought. These Philosophical Systems were developed by six sages (5). **More details of the six philosophical systems are in Part III of this book; please refer to it.**

## Tantra

Another set of scriptures, parallel to the Vēdic scriptures, is called Tantra, the scripture by which knowledge is spread. The Tantra scriptures include a vast array of śāstras. They fall under five categories – Śaiva, Śakta, Vaiṣṇava, Soura, and Gāṇapatya. In addition, there are Buddhist Tantras. From the outset, Tantra has straddled both Hinduism and Buddhism, and the tantric style teachings can be found even in Jainism (49). **Śūnyasaṃpādane** at the beginning of its fourth chapter says that Basavaṇṇa restored the practice of Vīraśaivism which had been tarnished by the six philosophical systems and six creeds. The six creeds refers to the doctrines of Śaiva, Śakta, Vaiṣṇava, Gāṇapatya, Soura and Kāpālīka (1). **For more details, please refer to Part III of this book.**

## Śivāgama

Śivāgamas are said to have come directly from Śiva. Most of these Śivāgamas deal with religious rights and practices pertaining to the Śaiva sect, and are considered to form the main scripture of the Śaivas (1). Some parts of the Śivāgamas known as Uttarāgamas lend some of their concepts to the philosophy and practice of the Vīraśaivas.

It is to be noted that although the Ṣaṣṭhala, Pañcācāra and Aṣṭāvaraṇa features existed before, particularly in the Śivāgamas, the Vēraśaivayōga concepts are the modified concepts developed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE.

**For more details of Śivāgamas, please refer to Part III of this book.**

## Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi

Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi is composed in Sanskrit. Siddhānta means doctrine, and Śikhāmaṇi means crest-jewel. It is said to be the crest-jewel of all the doctrines. It is considered to be the basic scripture, if not the main scripture, of the Viraśaivas, the main scripture being the Śūnya Saṁpādane. Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi is said to have been compiled by Śrī Śivayōgi Śivācārya. It has been developed in the form of a dialog between the sage Śrī Rēṇuka and the sage Agastya, and is also called Rēṇukagītā. It is a teaching of the doctrine of 101 sthalas. It harmonizes the concepts of duality and non-duality (oneness). It is a collection of ślōkas (stanzas) grouped into 21 chapters called paricchedaḥ. Although many commentaries have been written on the Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi, the one most often included in the Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi text itself is the Sanskrit commentary called 'Tattvapradīpikā' written by Maritoṇṭadārya in the seventeenth century CE. It is interesting to note that Śūnyasaṁpādane (1), the main scripture of Viraśaivas, also has 21 chapters (upadēśa). The first four chapters of Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi are preliminary chapters; the teaching of the 101 sthalas is in chapters five through twenty; and the twenty-first chapter is devoted to some concluding topics (7).

Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi being such an authoritative document, it would be advisable to know more about who the author was, and when the doctrine was composed. Some of the information is in the Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi itself (7). But Śūnyasaṁpādane (1), in the prose section prior to vaçana #20 on page 143 of volume II, and in the notes and comments section on pages 388-389, says that Basavaṇṇa is the founder of the one hundred one sthalas. **For more details, please see Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi article in Part III of this book.**

For further information the reader may refer to a concise composition of 101 sthala doctrine Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi (18). Also, may refer to the electronic version of the second edition of the doctrine 'Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi' published by Veerashaiva Samaja of North America in 2013. This electronic version is at the web site of VSNA.

## Vaĉana

Vaĉana literature of the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE, most of which is in Kannaḍa language, is the most important part of the philosophy and practice of the Vīraśaivas. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century there was a great religious movement in the form of revitalization and reformation of the Vīraśaiva, Śaiva and other Hindu sects, in Karnāṭaka, India. The great leader of this movement was Basava, popularly known as Basavaṅṅa and respectfully referred to as Basavēśvara. He was the Prime Minister of the king Bijjala who ruled from the capitol city of Kalyāṅa, over a large territory of the present day Karnāṭaka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra States. Basavaṅṅa founded an assembly hall called Anubhava Maṅṭapa where regular discourses about religion and society were held. Scholars from all over India were attracted to this place, and one among them was Allama Prabhu, popularly known as Prabhudēva. He was regarded as the most intellectual Vīraśaiva scholar of the time, and became the leader presiding over deliberations in the Anubhava Maṅṭapa. A new Philosophical System was developed, with accurate interpretation and practical implementation of ideas. With this system, the vaĉana literature was popularized.

Vaĉanas, consisting of short rhythmic prose and yet poetry in spirit, were widely used by the Vīraśaivas to propagate knowledge and the right way of life among the masses. The vaĉanas were simple in form, and were in everyday language of the people. They were very inspirational and appealing to the masses. They were full of spiritual insight and had mystic overtones. The vaĉanas were said to be comparable to the Upaniṣadic sayings of the great ancient sages. At the end of each vaĉana, the authors addressed the Absolute Divinity with a unique name selected by them, the name, specific to each author, serving as the author's identification signature. For example, Basavaṅṅa's vaĉanas had Kūḍala Saṅgama Dēva, and Prabhudēva's vaĉanas had Guhēśvara or Guhēśvaraliṅga in them. In a span of 20 years time then, an enormous number of vaĉanas, according to one estimate, as many as a million, were composed and recorded on thalegari leaves and metal plates (51).

However, due to disturbed conditions that ensued, the vaĉana literature was scattered, and some of it was lost. It is only during the Vijayanagara Empire in the 15<sup>th</sup> century that the Vīraśaiva religion and culture were revived. The Vīraśaiva scholars systematically collected the retrievable portions of the vaĉana literature. About 25,000 vaĉanas and 300 authors were identified, and 1,426 vaĉanas of Basavaṅṅa and 1,643 vaĉanas of Prabhudēva were found (51). The vaĉanaśāstras were collated, edited and annotated. It was at that time that four versions of **Śūnya Saṃpādane** were compiled. The Śūnyasaṃpādane is one of the most important documents of the Vīraśaiva philosophy and faith, and it occupies a very high place in the whole range of Indian literature (see 'Śūnya Saṃpādane' article).



## Śūnya Saṁpādane

Śūnyasaṁpādane means attainment of Śūnya, the Absolute State. Here in this article the term Śūnyasaṁpādane is used to mean the text of the vaḥanas compiled in the form of a document or a book with a title of Śūnyasaṁpādane. The Śūnyasaṁpādane is one of the most important documents of the Viraśaiva philosophy and faith, and it occupies a very high place in the whole range of Indian literature. Śūnyasaṁpādane compilations are considered by Viraśaivas to be what the Bible is to the Christians. During the Vijayanagara Empire in the 15<sup>th</sup> century of the Common Era (CE/AD) the Viraśaiva scholars systematically collected the retrievable portions of the vaḥana literature and compiled it into the format of Śūnyasaṁpādane. This was said to have been done under the patronage of Jakkaṇārya and Lakkaṇṇa Doṇḍeśa Ministers of Praudha Dēvarāya, or Dēvarāya II (1419 -1447 CE). Four versions of Śūnyasaṁpādane were compiled. The first version was compiled by Śivagaṇa Prasādi Mahādēvayya. It comprises of 1012 vaḥanas. The second version containing 1599 vaḥanas was compiled by Halageyadēva. The third was prepared by Gummalāpura Siddaliṅgēśa Śivayōgi, a disciple of Toṇṭada Siddaliṅgēśvara; it contains 1439 vaḥanas. The fourth compilation of Śūnyasaṁpādane with 1543 vaḥanas was by Gūḷūra Siddhaviraṇārya. This fourth scripture was first edited and brought out in print form by Dr. P. G. Halakatti in the year 1930, and later revised and published by Professor S. S. Bhusanurmāth in 1958. This Kannaḍa version of the Śūnyasaṁpādane was translated into a comprehensive edition in English by the Karnatak University, Dharwar, India (1). The five volumes of this English composition, contain not only Kannaḍa texts and vaḥanas but also English introduction, text, transliteration, translation, notes, and comments. The five volumes were published one at a time in 1965, 1968, 1969, 1970 and 1971. It is this five volume version (1) that is referred to in all the articles of this book.

It is said that Śūnyasaṁpādane is the quintessence of the Viraśaiva Philosophy. It is composed mainly in the form of discourses between various Viraśaiva saints. The central figure of Śūnyasaṁpādane is Allama Prabhu, popularly known as Prabhudēva. He was the leader presiding over the deliberations in the Anubhava Maṅṭapa at the city of Kalyāṇa. The main theme of discussion was the Śaṭsthala Philosophy. Prabhudēva brought about a synthesis of various paths that lead to liberation/salvation. Questions that were raised with regard to the right interpretation and practical implementation of new ideas were answered by him. These deliberations have been incorporated in the Śūnyasaṁpādane in the form of vaḥanas.

Śūnyasaṁpādane has twenty-one '*upadēśas*' or chapters. The first chapter with the title 'Prabhudēva's Śūnyasaṁpādane' is the most important part, because, it has the vaḥanas of the Śaṭsthala Philosophy and practice. A concise composition of the whole Śūnya Saṁpādane has been published in an electronic form by the Veerashaiva Samaja of North America at their website vana.org. It can be downloaded; it is free.

## Advaita Philosophy of Viraśaivas

Advaita Philosophy is the 'Oneness' Philosophy. Viraśaivas believe in only one Absolute Reality called Śūnya. Literal meaning of Śūnya is 'void' 'emptiness' or 'nothing'. The Śūnya of Viraśaivas is the 'Infinite' or the 'Absolute', and is equivalent to Brahman of the Upaniṣads.

Brahman is mere Jñāna or Knowledge. Brahman is impartite and without a body, and therefore, it can not be worshipped by an ordinary person. A form of deity has to be adopted for an ordinary aspirant for the purpose of worship. For a Vēdic-ritualistic person, the deity is the sacred fire into which oblations are offered. For a person of contemplation the deity is in the heart of that person. For one who is not enlightened yet, the deity is the image in a concrete form. But for the one who knows Ātman (Self), it is the Self that is everywhere.

The Viraśaivas propound the theory of '*Sāmarasyavāda*' or the argument that delineates the idea of 'Unity' or 'Oneness'. Viraśaivas have conveniently adopted Śiva for the purpose of worship. Brahman or Śiva has two aspects. Nirguṇa Brahman or Nirguṇa Śiva is attribute-less and is Śūnya of Viraśaivas. Nirguṇa Śiva is transcendent and tranquil, and therefore is not associated with Śakti. Śūnyasāmpādane is the attainment of this Nirguṇa state of Śiva. The other aspect of Śiva is the Saguṇa aspect with attributes. In this Saguṇa aspect, Śiva is associated with Śakti. Out of this Saguṇa Śiva, Śakti emanates and creates the universe.

Śiva is the male component, and Śakti is the female component. Śiva and Śakti are inseparable; the inseparable relationship is compared to the fire and its burning power. Saguṇa Śiva has active Consciousness. The universe and the worldly existence are created by Śakti in Śiva's Consciousness. The activities are being played out as Līlā (sport, game, play, play acting) in Śiva's Consciousness. Hence everything is real within Śiva's Consciousness – that way everything is still one – one Reality.

The impersonal Nirguṇa Śiva transcends the human intellect; therefore the personal Saguṇa Śiva is worshipped as Liṅga which represents the whole universe. But the Absolute is to be known as It really is, and not as one wishes to see It (1). Viraśaivas believe that one can attain oneness with the Absolute, even when alive. The spiritual aspirant has to first go through various moral and ethical practices, worship Śiva/Liṅga as the personal God, and then go through intense meditation which enables the aspirant the knowledge of the inner Divine Self. When the body and soul is Divine, the outer symbol is superfluous. At that stage, rigid scriptural prescription of outward aids for worship is like confining the Infinite with a headband, it is absurd (1).

This process of attaining oneness is called Śūnyasāmpādane. It is also called Liṅgāṅgasāmarasya, the attainment of union of Liṅga and Aṅga. The attainment of Śūnya

is through Ṣaṭsthala. The Viraśaiva concept of Ṣaṭsthala is the spiritual hierarchy of six stages through which the seeker rises stage by stage till the apparent duality vanishes, and the seeker attains oneness. The Ṣaṭsthalas are Bhaktasthala, Māhēśvarasthala, Prasādisthala, Prāṇalingisthala, Śaraṇasthala and Aikyasthala.

Viraśaivas believe that the worship of, or meditation on the monosyllable **Ōm** can lead to the highest knowledge. This Ōmkāra or Ōm-form is said to represent both Nirguṇa and Saguṇa aspects of Brahman or Śiva. Ōmkāra is termed Praṇava, because it is the source of support of Prāṇa which is life or life-force. But the Absolute is termed *Praṇavaparātpara* – that which transcends even the Praṇava. Ōm is *Śabdabrahman* (śabda means sound) whereas the Absolute is 'Silence'. One has to transcend Ōm to attain the Absolute.

It appears that Viraśaivism and Liṅgāyatism are synonymous, and are used interchangeably. However, the Liṅgāyat version applies/uses the term Liṅga for everything to emphasize the oneness philosophy. Śūnya is Niṣkala Liṅga. The Universal Self is Mahāliṅga. The Individual Self is Ātmaliṅga. Śūnyasāmpādane, the attainment of oneness with the Absolute, is Liṅgāṅgasāmarasya. The personal god Śiva is Iṣṭaliṅga.

Śūnyasāmpādane is the main scripture of the Viraśaivas. This main scripture considers the Viraśaiva philosophy to be Śiva-advaita philosophy - Śivādvaitism. Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi, another important Viraśaiva scripture also states the philosophy to be Śiva-advaita Philosophy. However some others have raised controversy, stating that it is Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaitism (50). This term is not mentioned anywhere in either Śūnyasāmpādane or Siddhānta Śikhāmaṇi. Professor Sakhare in his book (50) states that the philosophy of Liṅgāyatism is the same as that of Kashmere Śivādvaitas. Śiva is characterized and distinguished (viśiṣṭa) by His power (Śakti) or capacity to work. Kashmere philosophers imply the viśiṣṭatva of Śiva, but do not express it in so many words; but Liṅgāyatas do – this is the point of difference in terminology only (page 281 of reference 50). He continues – Liṅgāyat philosophy of Māyā is an improvement upon Kashmerean theory where there is no explanation of what the real Māyā is (page 290 of reference 50). He states that misconception is possible if the content of Paraśiva, the unmanifest condition of the universe in Śiva's consciousness (Śakti) is stressed; and that this could be construed to be similar to the philosophy of Rāmānuja's school of Viśiṣṭādvaita (page 290 of reference 50). Emphasizing Śakti and using the term viśiṣṭa in the proposal of Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaitism is causing too much confusion, and the concept may be misconstrued.

It is to be pointed out again that Śūnyasāmpādane is the attainment of Śūnya, the Absolute, the Infinite, the Nirguṇa aspect of Brahman or Śiva. Nirguṇa Śiva is not associated with Śakti. Therefore the Viraśaiva Philosophy cannot be Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaitism, because it would mean the attainment of Saguṇa Śiva only; that is not the philosophy of Viraśaivas.

As to the practice of Viraśaivism – Śūnyasāmpādane text (1) is replete with the use of the terms Śivādvaita and Śivādvaita-bhakti in the practice of Viraśaivism where the worshipper and the worshipped is one and the same. Śiva-advaita philosophy is generally

accepted to be the philosophy of Vīraśaivas. If there is a need for another term to differentiate the philosophy of Vīraśaivas from others, then may be, simply the term Vīra-advaitism (Vīrādvaitism) or **Liṅga-advaitism (Liṅgādvaitism)** could be used.

## Aṅga and Liṅga

The word **Aṅga**, as used by Vīraśaivas, has a special meaning. In the Vēdāntic language, when the pure Ātman is superimposed on the attributes of the body, mind and the senses, it becomes Jīva (soul) which is the doer of the deeds and the enjoyer of the rewards thereof. For Vīraśaivas, this ordinary soul Jīva is not Aṅga; any ordinary soul can not be an Aṅga. Only when the soul yearns to become one with Liṅga (Liṅgāṅga sāmarasya) then only it is an Aṅga. It is said that Jīva is called Aṅga because it moves to Paraśivabrahman; the word Aṅga is derived from 'Aṅ' meaning 'Brahman' and the verb root 'gam' for 'gaçhati' meaning 'goes to'; thus the persons learned in Vīraśaivism call Jīva as Aṅga (page 97 of reference 7 translating Anubhava Sūtra 4.4).

In Vīraśaiva and Hindu literature, the term Aṅga is also used to mean organs of the body. It is said that the seeker's meditation upon six Liṅgas in his six Aṅgas (organs) is known as Ācāra or discipline for the mastery of Ṣaṣṭhala, referring to Ācāraliṅga in the nose, Guruliṅga in the tongue, Śivaliṅga in the eyes, Jaṅgamaliṅga in the touch, Prasādaliṅga in the ears, and Mahāliṅga in the heart (page 37, volume I of reference 1). Yōga-sūtra of Patañjali is the Aṣṭāṅga Yōga. Aṣṭāṅga means eight limbs or eight parts, namely, *yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇa, dhyāna and samādhi*.

Literal meaning of the term **Liṅga** is 'mark', 'symbol' or 'characteristic'. Liṅga of Vīraśaivas represents the whole universe; it is the Ultimate Reality, the Absolute, the Śūnya, the Paraśivabrahman. It is described as '... the Undivided Liṅga (Niṣkala Liṅga), indivisible, without a second, peerless, without parts, spotless, inclusive of the entire void which is existence, knowledge, bliss, eternity and perfection ...' (page 52, volume I of reference 1).

According to Vīraśaiva Philosophy, the Absolute Reality manifests itself as Aṅga and Liṅga (page 373 of volume II of reference 1). Aṅga is the Individual Self, and Liṅga is the Universal Self. Vīraśaivas believe that the Individual Self and the Universal Self are one and the same, but this oneness has to be attained. So the main aim of the Vīraśaivas is to attain oneness. The attainment where Aṅga and Liṅga become one is Liṅgāṅga sāmarasya. It is also called Śūnyasaṁpādane – attainment of the Absolute state.

## Vīraśaiva Yōga

Yoga means both 'union' and 'discipline', and it is the unitive-discipline. Yōga is a unique process, by the disciplined practice of which an aspirant, the individual Self, is united with the Universal Self. It is to be noted here that Vīraśaivas consider that the 'union' does not mean union of two separate entities which may imply duality. It is considered as 'union-less union' because it is the reformation of the same entity, which under the influence of Māyā (the power that obstructs the understanding of Reality), falsely appears to be two. Hindu philosophy is unique in that its different methods of yōga practice can lead to the same highest goal. For the psychic type of person, Rājayōga is suitable. The discriminating or the reasoning type of person is suited for the path of Jñāna yōga. Bhaktiyōga is suitable for a devotional type of person, and Karmayōga is for an action oriented person. Śūnyasāmpādane (1), in its concluding remarks, states 'Śūnyasāmpādane is a treasury of the attainment of the great Rājayōga'. Thus, Rājayōga which is the Aṣṭāṅga Yōga of Patañjali is part of the practice of Vīraśaivas. A general study and practice of the principles of all types of yōgas may be more beneficial to an individual. **Please see 'Yōga' article in Part III of this book.**

Right at the outset, it should be noted that **Vīraśaivas do not pray**. They worship and completely surrender, and also they meditate and contemplate. Use of the English word 'prayer' should be avoided. The word 'prayer' means an earnest request for something as in the act of petitioning God to grant a favor; it is kind of begging God to sanction something. It indicates duality – that the individual and God are two separate and independent entities – two Realities. Therefore, Vīraśaivas do not pray. Vīraśaivas consider the worshipper and the worshipped to be one and the same. Namaḥ in 'Ōm namaḥ Śivāya' means obeisance. Obeisance is bowing down to show respect, or submission. Meditation is not prayer; meditation is to think, to consider, to ponder. After stabilization of the mind, and only after that, the mind is focused on the inner Self; this is meditation. Contemplation has a similar meaning as intense meditation.

Another point to be made right at the outset is that **Vīraśaivas do not go to a temple to worship**. One of Prabhudēva's vācānas makes this clear. When the body itself is the temple of God, why build a stone temple elsewhere? When the breath (Prāṇa) itself has become Liṅga, why ask for a Liṅga elsewhere? Furthermore, Vīraśaivas do not worship idols; Iṣṭaliṅga is not considered as an idol.

The Vīraśaivas believe that the Universal Self and the Individual Self is one and the same. The main aim of Vīraśaivas is the attainment (sāmpādane) of the Supreme State (Śūnya) – the attainment of Oneness - Śūnyasāmpādane. The process by which this can be achieved is Vīraśaivayōga. Some Vīraśaiva scholars call this process **Liṅgayōga**. Vīraśaivayōga is a lifelong process that involves six stages - **Ṣaṣṭhala** - where one must ascend from an initial dim awareness of the Divine, to the final and complete identification

with the Absolute. **It is to be noted that the Divine experience is not to be had after death, but to be attained during life.**

The Vīraśaivas have devised this practical way of achieving Oneness, with a common person in mind. It is within reach of anyone whether it is a man or a woman, or of any caste or creed, and it is not a monopoly of a chosen few. By recognizing a wide diversity among individuals – love and affection predominating in some, action and will in some, and logic and reason in some others – the Vīraśaivas have given equal importance to devotion, action and knowledge.

In order to accomplish the goal, the Vīraśaivas prescribe **Pañcācāra**. Pañcā is five, and ācāra refers to practice, discipline or conduct. The five codes of conduct are as follows: **Liṅgācāra** is Liṅga worship. **Sadācāra** is to lead a simple and virtuous life. **Śivācāra** consists in the firm conviction that there is no other refuge apart from Śiva the Parabrahman, and is to realize that Divine Śiva is in everyone, irrespective of gender, wealth, caste or creed, and to treat everyone equally. **Bhṛtyācāra** is to show humility, modesty and respect for others. And **Gaṇācāra** is to strive for improvement and development of the community as a whole.

Vīraśaivas do not follow the Hindu 'āśrama' concept where ordinary individuals have to live through the four stages of their lives – brahmaçārya, gr̥hasthya (gr̥hasthya), vānaprastha (vānaprasthya) and saṅnyāsa. Brahmaçārya is the student life consisting of formal education and acquiring noble virtues with emphasis placed on character development, acquiring right knowledge, and purifying the body and soul. The student must stay clear of going the way of evil worldly desires. Gr̥hastha is the householder, a family person. Gr̥hasthya is the life of righteousness, love, devotion and respect. Vānaprasthya is the retired person's life, and nowadays it is not a forest life of a hermit. The person gradually detaches from the worldly passions and possessions. Once the person completely renounces the worldly life, that person enters the life of a monk (sannyāsi). Some individuals may go directly from any of the first three stages of life to sannyāsa by completely renouncing the worldly life. Spiritual development and progress occurs throughout one's life. The Vīraśaivas believe that there is no need for complete abandonment of the family in order to achieve the spiritual goal. Otherwise the spiritual development and progress is similar to āśramadharmā; it occurs throughout one's life.

Another aid the Vīraśaivas may use is **Aṣṭāvaraṇa**. Aṣṭa is eight, and āvaraṇa means external protective coverings or shields. They are – Guru, Liṅga, Jaṅgama, Pādōdaka, Prasāda, Vibhūti, Rudrākṣi, and Mantra. According to Vīraśaivas, the above eight-fold external protective coverings have counterparts in the inner being. These are – Arivu (awareness), Sujñāna (right knowledge), Svānubhāva (self-experience), Karuṇāmṛtā (nectar of compassion), Kṛpāprasāda (gift of grace), Bhasita (self-conscious splendor), Ćitkānte (self-conscious light), and Ćidānaṇḍa (self-conscious bliss). Attainment of the inner counterparts of the external aspects of Aṣṭāvaraṇa is more important for the Vīraśaivas.

Some of the salient features of the Viraśaiva's daily life are **Kāyaka** and **Dāsōha**.

The term **kāyaka**, derived from kāya meaning the body, ordinarily means something related to the body. In the Viraśaiva system of life, it means dedicated manual labor; the labor may extend to the mental or intellectual field. First, in the name of service, one should never beg; such a beggar moves away from, rather than towards, realization. Second, while engaged in kāyaka, one should not mind anybody, even if it is Guru, Liṅga or Jaṅgama; they are all working with the One, as they are not exempt from kāyaka. Third, the labor of a Viraśaiva should never fetch more than it is worth; may get less, but never more. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon the Viraśaiva to do kāyaka with a pure heart and mind, and always to put one's best into the work. This is how one tries to express the Divine in oneself through one's work. Such work should never be motivated by greed or egoistic self. It is always dedicated to the Divine.

Dāsōham means 'I am Thy servant'. **Dāsōha**, the service, is closely associated with kāyaka. The work and all the earnings from work must first be offered to God. Since God is formless, the offerings are directed through the godly – Guru, Jaṅgama and the community of Viraśaivas. The Viraśaiva's activities are driven by this profound sense of service – Dāsōha.

The Viraśaivayōga basically consists of Ṣaṣṭhala. The term sthala is used here to mean a stage, a temporary resting place for a progressing soul on its spiritual journey to Śūnya. At each sthala the aspirant gets more spiritual experience sufficient enough to advance/ascend to the next higher sthala. It is to be noted here that the concept of duality progresses to the concept of non-duality (oneness) from the Bhaktasthala to the Prasādisthala; and from Prāṅliṅgasthala onwards, it is all oneness philosophy.

Pañcācāra and Aṣṭāvaraṇa are the aids that help accomplish the goal of Ṣaṣṭhala. It is to be noted that although the Ṣaṣṭhala, Pañcācāra and Aṣṭāvaraṇa features existed before, particularly in the Śivāgamas, the Viraśaivayōga concepts are the modified concepts developed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE. Further details of the practice of Viraśaivayōga are in three articles – 'Body, Breath and Mind, and the Inner Self', 'Prāṅa and Kuṇḍalini', and 'Ṣaṣṭhala' in this book; please refer to them.

It is to be noted that the attainment of oneness is a life long process. It does not happen overnight or in a few years. The Viraśaivas consider everyday to be a pious day, as well as an auspicious and celebrating day. **Practice of Viraśaivayōga is not just worship, acquiring right knowledge and meditation; it includes all aspects of one's daily life.**



## Body, Breath and Mind, and the Inner Self

Viraśaivas believe in only one Absolute Reality called Śūnya. The main aim of the Viraśaivas is to attain oneness with this Reality - Śūnyasaṃpādane. To attain oneness, first in the preparatory steps, the person has to realize the Divine presence in one's body, and then in six stages (Ṣaṣṭhala), one must ascend from the initial dim awareness of God to the final and complete identity with Śūnya (1, 19). In this process it is emphasized that the inner Self and the body are not identical, and that to shift the sense of identity from the body-breath-mind to the inner Self. A question then arises as to the importance of body, breath (life/prāṇa), and mind in this process of liberation of the Self.

According to the Advaita Vēdānta Philosophy of Śankarācārya, Brahman is the only Reality, and everything else is *mitya* (false/illusion). The world of multiplicity, including the body, breath and mind, is simply a product of spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*), and when the root ignorance of the unenlightened mind is removed, the world reveals itself in the true nature which is Saçcīdānanda (being-knowledge-bliss). Since the body and the world as a whole is deemed insignificant, the spiritual seeker is further advised to focus exclusively on the Self, abandoning all conventional pursuits. It also views the body as a breeding ground for karma, and an automatic hindrance to enlightenment, and therefore it is worthy of a little more than condemnation. On the other hand Ćarvākas the materialists who accept only what are directly perceived, believe only in the existence of material elements including the body, and reluctantly agree in consciousness as a by-product of the material brain, and not as a primary manifestation.

Contrary to the above two views, the Viraśaivas believe that the universe is a manifestation of the Ultimate Reality, and that body is a temple of the Divine. The Viraśaiva Sadbhakti requires not only the liberation of the soul but also the liberation of the body, life and mind (page 412, volume II of reference 1). What is more important is that, all these three – body, life and mind - should be made into the nature of the Divine, and be united with the Divine. It is said that to make the body, mind and the senses pure, it is necessary to analyze, know and understand their nature and qualities, and then empty them of all their creaturely qualities.

The body should be emptied of its earthliness; it is to be unburdened of all corporeal qualities – this is the liberation of the body. Then the body is to be filled with the Divine nature which is practice (*ācāra*), and is to be elevated to the position of Liṅga. Pañcācāra, the practicing of the five codes of conduct, comes here (see 'Viraśaiva Yōga' article). Vaçanas are the simple devices that are used to direct the masses. One such vaçana commands the practice of very basic ethical principles (52).

These commandments engrave in the heart –  
 Thou shall not steal nor kill.  
 Let no falsehood foul thy tongue;

Nor anger burn thy brow.  
 Bear with one another  
 Stand not high in thy own esteem.  
 So shall thy ways both of heart and demeanor  
 Proclaim thy purity;  
 And shall find favor  
 Of Kūḍala Saṅgama Dēva.

There is no room for hatred or violence of any kind. One has to get rid of all the desires and passions such as lust, anger/aggression, greed, infatuation/delusion, boasting/ego and jealousy/envy. One has to understand that money itself is neither holy nor unholy; it depends on how it is earned. Money earned by dedicated labor is taken as something holy; that earned with avarice is unholy. In the path of spirituality, it is sheer ignorance to require commendation for performance; it is ego.

The mind is invariably affected by the lust of the body; such an infected mind cannot have love for the Divine. One must transform lust, greed, infatuation, excessive pride, and jealousy into active virtues. This refinement of the body halts the fickleness of the mind. Mind should stand above all passions and agitations. The will should not desire for worldly or other-worldly rewards. The thought has to cease its wanderings on the plane of ordinary consciousness. The mind should be delivered from its earthliness which is ignorance, and should be further filled with Divine knowledge – this is the liberation of the mind.

**Restlessness of the mind is of a great hindrance in the way of discipline.** Life, mind and intellect remain impure if the stillness of the soul is not attained. In order to attain calmness, the seeker should continue to acquire knowledge and practice Vīraśaivayōga. **Restless activities of the mind are to be brought to a stable status**, not through force or suppression, but through persuasion, and by directing the expression towards a more socially or culturally acceptable way of life. Disciplining the mind and the thought process is important. One must not venture into any bad thoughts and thoughts of harming other beings. At the verge of such, those thoughts are to be diverted into good thoughts and thoughts of helping others. Sometimes it may be necessary to avert such bad thoughts by chanting as many times as necessary, either silently or aloud, the (six-syllable) ṣaḍakṣara mantra – ‘Ōṃ Namaḥ Śivāya’ – or simply ‘Om’. Once the restlessness of the mind disappears, the mind itself merges with the Self.

From birth till death, the outer covering which is the body, serves its master, the vital breath **Prāṇa**, in all possible ways. Life is infinitely more important a factor than the body. Life is an active function, and according to Upaniṣadic saying, gets its energy from Brahman. According to the Vīraśaivas it is the Liṅga (page385, volume II of reference 1). The relationship between the body and the vital breath is compared to that of a Bhakta and the Jaṅgama. The body is regarded as a gift of the Divine Grace – Prasādakāya (kāya pertains to the body). The body contains the seeds of Divinity.

Vīraśaivism asserts the value of the body, life and mind for spiritual realization. It considers that the Liṅga has taken triple form in these - Iṣṭaliṅga, Prāṇaliṅga and Bhāvāliṅga respectively. It is through the realization of the three Liṅgas that one has to advance and attain to the Absolute (pages 387 & 392, volume III of reference 1).

Religious practice is based on the philosophy of that particular religion or sect. The Vīraśaiva Philosophy for the attainment of the Ultimate Reality is the reverse process of creation and evolution of the worldly life. The practice of Vīraśaivayōga takes the individual back to the original source, in the reverse order in which the individual came into existence.

The One has become Many, and in addition has given rise to countless objects. In order to be liberated, an individual must trace back the path from many to the One. In Vīraśaivism, *Prakṛti*, or phenomenal nature, is considered to be *aśuddha* or impure, and so too all the evolutes of *Prakṛti*, namely, earth, water, fire, air, sky, mind (moon), intellect (sun) and ego. This impurity is known as *Pūrvāśraya*. It has to be purged off by the touch of Spiritual-nature, *Parā-prakṛti*, through the Aṣṭāvaraṇa (see 'Vīraśaiva Yōga' article). Although the followers of Bhaktimārga advocate the necessity of ritualistic spiritual practice, particularly the Aṣṭāvaraṇa aspect, for the attainment of the Absolute, Prabhudēva, however, preaches the superiority of jñāna – 'to claim that religious practice is indispensable for the realization of Paraśiva, shows a sense of duality which betrays a want of faith that God is inherent in the Consciousness' (page 427, volume I of reference 1). It is to be noted that the aspirant, here, sheds the earthly nature of the body, breath and mind – breaks the bondage of things but not the things themselves, as they are of vital importance for advancement; they are the offerings one must make to the Divine (page 292, volume V of reference 1).

The individual is faced with the influence of *Māyā* and the three malas (taints/impurities). The three malas - *Āṇavamala* the primordial dirt that subsists in the soul and keeps it separated from the Divine; *Māyāmala* that is not an illusion and is associated with subtle matter; and *Karmamala* the result of action performed by the individual and associated with the soul which enjoys or suffers according to its deeds - can, according to the Vīraśaivas, be wiped out by the grace of Guru (page 393, volume I of reference 1). *Anugraha* is the bestowal of Supreme Grace by the *Sadguru* (divine teacher), upon a disciple who is fully ready for receiving it. It is a process in which the impurities of the disciple's body, mind and soul are cleansed. There is a transformation – a spiritual rebirth. The disciple feels the Divine presence in the body (page 357, volume II of reference 1). The aspirant, who vanquishes these three malas, attains purity of the body (*Śuddha*), clarity of the mind (*Siddha*), and perfection of the will (*Prasiddha*) (page 403, volume I of reference 1).

After overcoming the above obstacles and completing the preliminary steps, the aspirant must continue to practice Vīraśaivayōga; mere purity of body, life, and will does not mean

that Liᅅga is firm and that it leads to ultimate Reality; higher spiritual experience is essential for that. This is accomplished by the continued practice of Viraśaivayōga, where one ascends in six stages (ᅀaᅀsthalā) in one's spiritual path for the complete identification with the Absolute.

## Prāṇa and Kuṇḍalini

Prāṇa means breath of life in general. It also means life, life-force, life-energy and vital-breath. Prāṇa is a dynamic form of energy (kinetic energy), and is responsible for all the life-forces that make the embodiment of the Divine possible. Source of this energy is Liṅga. Vīraśaivism considers that Liṅga has taken triple form in the body, prāṇa, and mind, in the form of Iṣṭaliṅga, Prāṇaliṅga, and Bhāvaliṅga respectively.

Prāṇa, the life-energy courses throughout the body through a network of currents/pathways/conduits/channels - **nāḍi**. Although these nāḍis may have correlation with the anatomical structures such as blood vessels, nerves, nerve plexuses, spine, spinal canal, spinal cord and brain, these nāḍis were visualized or perceived by the ancient yōgic seers to be currents of prāṇa in the body, and therefore not to be confused with the physical structures within the body. It is said that these cannot be seen by dissecting the body, but can be visualized during yōgic meditation. It is said that there are innumerable nāḍis that traverse the body. There are three main nāḍis. The central/axial current pathway **Suṣumnā** nāḍi courses from the base/root position (mūlsthāna), deep in the pelvis at the level of the lower end of the spine, to the top of the head. The two spiral currents, **Īḍā** (comfort) nāḍi located to the left of Suṣumnā at the base, and **Piṅgaḷā** (tawny) nāḍi located to the right of Suṣumnā at the base, spiral upward around the Suṣumnānāḍi, and end at the level of the upper part of the nasal passages; each ending on the opposite side of Suṣumnā. However, it is to be noted that Śūnya Saṃpādane (1), states that Īḍā and Piṅgaḷā also end at the top of the brain/head like the Suṣumnā nāḍi in Brahmarandhra. In the 75<sup>th</sup> vācāna in the first chapter of Śūnyasaṃpādane, Prabhudēva calls Brahmarandhra where all these three nāḍis end/meet '*tribhuvanagiri*' which means 'mountain of the triple abode'.

Prāṇa courses through all these nāḍis in a discontinuous fashion, and pools in some areas along the Suṣumnā to form vortices or wheels (**ĉakra**) of energy centers. These centers are also called lotuses (**Padma**). There are seven main ĉakras/lotuses. The lower six lotuses face upwards and have a total of fifty petals connecting fifty Sanskrit letters (akṣaras) in the form of sacred spells. The lotus at the top of the head, faces down, and it has one thousand white petals with the fifty Sanskrit letters going around and around twenty times. The seven lotus centers are listed from the base to the top of the head.

1. **Mūlādhāra**: Mūla is base or root, and adhāra is support or prop. It is also called Mūlsthāna. It is located deep in the pelvis at the level of the lower end of the spine. This lotus has four petals representing the four quarters of space. The Vīraśaivas believe that **Āĉāraliṅga** has its seat here.
2. **Svādiṣṭhāna**: Sva is self or own. It is located at the level of the genitals. More than any other center, this one relates to desire, especially the sexual urge. It is depicted as a six-petalled lotus whose petals are connected with six afflictive

emotions of lust (kāma), anger/aggression (krōdha), greed (lōbha), delusion (mōha), boasting/ego (mada), and envy (mātsarya). **Guruliṅga** is said to be seated here.

3. **Maṇipura:** Maṇi is gem or jewel, and pura is city or town. This ten-petalled lotus is located at the level of the navel (nābhi). It is connected with the digestive system. **Śivaliṅga** is seated here.
4. **Anāhata:** Anāhata means unstruck. Nāda is the unstruck sound. It is located at the heart. Anāhata is also known as 'heart-lotus' (hṛt-padma, hṛdaya-kamala). Ever since the time of Ṛgvēda, the heart has been considered as the abode of Ātman (Ātmaliṅga, jīvaḥṁsa, individual soul). The heart lotus has twelve petals; the petals are arranged in two layers. The lower eight petals tend in a downward direction; whereas the upper four petals tend in the upward direction. **Jaṅgamaliṅga** is said to be seated here.
5. **Viśuddhi:** Viśuddhi is purity. It is located at the throat/neck, and is also known as throat-center (kaṇṭha). It is a sixteen-petalled lotus, and is linked with vowel sounds only. **Prasādaliṅga** is said to be seated here.
6. **Ājñā:** This 'command' center is situated in the middle of the head in the brain at the level where biṅdu the kuṅkuma dot is placed on the forehead (the third-eye position on the forehead). The yōgic masters consider this center as a place where mental telepathic communication can take place. This lotus has only two petals which connect to two seed letters (bījākṣara) 'harh' and 'kṣarh' representing the last two letters of the Sanskrit alphabet ha and kṣa. **Mahāliṅga** is said to be seated here.
7. **Sahasrāra:** It is located at the crown of the head. **Brahmarandhra**, meaning Brahmic-fissure, is another term used for this lotus. Some yōgis believe that at the time of liberation, consciousness leaves the body through this fissure or exit-point, to merge with Brahman. **Nōsala-amṛta/Paramāmṛta** is the **nectar of life** secreted in this center. This amṛta, sometimes also called as ambrosia, is said to be as cool as moonlight, and is the cause of ecstasy. [It is the author's opinion that this fluid is not cerebro-spinal-fluid as has been mentioned in reference 1; it is probably the group of chemicals known as endorphins which have a euphoric effect.] **Paramaśiva** is said to be seated here.

Vīraśaivas consider that three of these seven lotuses or cākras to be important (page 405 of volume I of Śūnyasāmpādane). In the 66<sup>th</sup> vācāna in Śūnyasāmpādane, Prabhudēva uses the terms '*mūlasthāna and ādimadhysthanas*' where Liṅga called Guhēśvara is located (1). The Mūlasthāna is called here as Mūlādhāra, The Madhyasthāna is the heart lotus Anāhata, and the Ādisthāna is Brahmarandhra or Sahasrāra. Vīraśaivas also believe that the Supreme Brahman which is called as **Jyotirliṅga** (lustrous Liṅga or Liṅga with

light emanating from it) is located in the heart lotus Anāhata.

**Kuṇḍalini:** Kuṇḍalini Śakti is the **Divine energy**. Kuṇḍalini means 'she who is coiled'. Śakti lies dormant (coiled-up) in the Mūlādhāra; the coils of Kuṇḍalini convey the notion of potentiality. It is the potential type of energy. When activated, Kuṇḍalini rises up into the Suṣūmnā nāḍi. For explanation purposes it is compared to a resting coiled snake, a cobra, in a lid-closed basket container of a snake charmer; when the lid is opened by the snake charmer along with music from a wind instrument, the cobra rises straight up. Kuṇḍalini Śakti is the Divine energy. It is more powerful than Prāṇa which is the human life-energy. [It is to be pointed out that there is a misprint on page 379 of volume I of Śūnya Saṃpādanā where it states that Kuṇḍalini is named after her two coils - Īḍā and Piṅgaḷā. That is not correct. Īḍā and Piṅgaḷā are spiral nāḍis as described above, and also as given in other parts of Śūnya Saṃpādanā; they are not coils of Kuṇḍalini.]

All these - Prāṇa, Nāḍi, Ćakra/Padma, and Kuṇḍalini – come into play during the practice of Prāṇāyāma, particularly in the Prāṇalīṅgi stage and onwards of Śaṭsthala.

Self-experience is the main characteristic of **Prāṇalīṅgīsthala**. The seeker's vision tends inwards and gets clarified. The body is a temple that enshrines the Divine. The vital-breath which courses through the body, worships the Liṅga with the flower of right aspiration. The breath, when regulated, emits fragrance which serves as a wreath of flowers for the Liṅga enshrined in the body.

The breath regulation, **Prāṇāyāma**, is practiced only in its elementary form by the Vīraśaivas. It is performed while the person is seated comfortably in a cross-legged position. Prāṇāyāma is not deep breathing which may lead to complications. Every aspect of breath-control is to be performed in a relaxed manner, and there should not be any jerky/sudden movement. There are three aspects – inhalation, retention and exhalation. Inhalation is accomplished by taking in a large breath of air smoothly. Retention of the breath is a natural breath-hold, and it should not be forced. If stability of the breath-hold is lost, the breath has to be released. Duration of retention of the breath is what is comfortable for that person. Exhalation of the breath is gradual and smooth. During this process of breath regulation, one feels a gradual expansion of the chest, and feels the air reaching all parts of the lungs. This allows full utilization of the life-breath.

This process of breath regulation moves life-energy through both Īḍānāḍi and Piṅgaḷānāḍi, from their upper ends, down to the lower ends at the Mūlādhāra. The life-energy then rises up in the Suṣūmnānāḍi, and reaches all the way to the top center Sahasrāra/Brahmarandhra. The energy is also distributed throughout the body via the innumerable smaller nāḍis. All this occurs during the phases of inhalation and retention. During the phase of exhalation, the energy courses back in the reverse order. Breath-control directly affects the ascending and descending currents of life-force. In an ordinary individual, the currents exist in a haphazard manner, and pose as obstacles for a free flow of vital-energy. The yōgic meditative practice of self-purification places these

currents in a proper order of alignment. When breath regulation becomes effortless, the person is totally absorbed in its fineness. Prāṇa and mind become intricately connected with each other in Sahasrāra.

The ultimate purpose of Prāṇāyāma is to effect the flow of Prāṇa through the central passage Suṣumnā, which then draws the much more powerful energy of Kuṇḍalini into the Suṣumnā. Before Kuṇḍalini can ascend the axial pathway, all impurities must be removed from the network of nāḍis and cākras. If not, it may result in serious physical and mental imbalances. Therefore, prior to embarking on Prāṇāyāma, one must purge all desires and emotional afflictions such as lust, anger/aggression, greed, infatuation, boasting/ego and envy/jealousy. This purifies the disorderly nature of Svādiṣṭhāna and Maṇipura. Then cultivating kindness, compassion and other such virtues, enhances the purification of heart lotus Anāhata. Breath control then aligns the life-energy currents into proper order, so that Kuṇḍalini can rise up into Suṣumnā unimpeded.

Once activated, Kuṇḍalini forces its way through Suṣumnā, and causes each pool of energy center (cakra) to vibrate intensely and fully. It opens up the closed-petalled lotuses (it blooms). As it goes from center to center, it leaves the previous center in a state of "void". At each center there is profound purification of the principles seated there. All the centers are increasingly homogenized until they vibrate in unison. The nectar of life **amṛta** is released. It is then that Ōm is heard in the state of ecstasy.

Śakti "voids" the respective Liṅgas seated at the lotuses, and finally joins Śiva in Śivapura/Sahasrāra. There is synthesis between Drṣṭi (vision) and Sṛṣṭi (creation), the vision being the subject and the creation being the object. The inner light pervades the whole universe. The union of two things is indispensable in every one of the different yōga systems. In Jñāna yōga it is the union of Ātman and Brahman, in Haṭha yōga it is Prāṇa and Apāna, in Layayōga Nāda and Bindu. Similarly, in Vīraśaivayōga, the union of Śakti from Mūlādhāra and Śiva abiding in Sahasrāra is said to be accomplished in Anāhata the heart lotus.

In this course of spiritual practice, the model of Prāṇa and Kuṇḍalini assists the practitioner, in the person's inward odyssey from the Many to the One.

**Ōm**



## Ṣaṭsthala

Ṣaṭsthala is the spiritual hierarchy of six stages through which the seeker raises, stage by stage till the apparent duality vanishes, and attains Oneness. Each sthala has dual aspects - Aṅgasthala and Liṅgasthala. Aṅgasthalas are – Bhakta, Māhēśvara, Prasādi, Prāṇaliṅgi, Śaraṇa, and Aikya sthalas. The Liṅgasthalas are - Ācāraliṅga, Guruliṅga, Śivaliṅga, Jaṅgaliṅga, Prasādaliṅga, and Mahāliṅga. The seeker has to develop the Aṅga-Liṅga relationship in each sthala.

**Bhaktasthala:** Bhakti is devotion or enlightened faith. Bhakta is one who is characterized by this state of faith. Bhakta's daily life includes worship of Liṅga usually in the morning, performing dedicated work (kāyaka), serving the community (dāsōha), and treating everyone with respect and humility. Humility is the crowning characteristic of this stage. Worship of Liṅga, unconditional service to Guru, and dāsōham (self-dedication) to Jaṅgama form the principle features of this stage. Jaṅgama is one who has renounced all earthly attachments, and travels to impart spiritual knowledge into people, without asking for anything in return. **Real worship is not with material things, but with pure devotion and knowledge** – perfect blend of love and knowledge dawns Divine Consciousness. The concept of discipline or spiritual practice (ācāra) is important. Bhakta is to incorporate love, knowledge, power, bliss and peace – the divine expressions – into one's inner and outer being, and have these functioning through one's body, life and mind. One has to harmonize one's thinking, saying and doing.

**Māhēśvarasthala:** Mahēśvara is one who is steadfast in one's faith, and who understands that wavering and lack of faith in oneness is neither brave nor resolute. As Liṅga encompasses the whole universe and is present in one's own self, there is no need to go to a temple. Going to a temple, and praying, imply duality. Worship of Liṅga is personal and there is no intermediary agent. Mahēśvara understands that the **worshipper and the worshipped are one and the same**. As the devotion becomes intense, all external rites and rituals are dispensed with, and only internal concentration is developed. The silent contemplation of the Divine remains the only yearning.

**Prasādisthala:** Everything is offered as prasāda, and one who offers it is a prasādi. In Prasādisthala, one dedicates oneself as the offering to the Divine. One who offers the body, senses, and mind to Guru, Liṅga, and Jaṅgama, is the partaker of the grace of the Divine that is prasāda. One should offer everything with a sense of self-dedication and self-surrender, and it must be free from any attachment. If attachment or craving persists, the transformation to prasāda cannot be effected. When ignorance and the sense of ego are completely eliminated, and when the offering is made with sincerity and humility, Prasāda ensues, and poise and peace are attained by the devotee. Serenity is the characteristic of the prasādi. **Thus, when it is offered properly, the fire of knowledge burns the illusion of desire into an illumination of joy.**

**Prāṇalingisthala:** Self-experience is the main characteristic. Body is a temple that enshrines the Divine. Breath-control and meditation performed by the seeker activates the vital force that permeates the whole body (please see the article 'Prāṇa and Kuṇḍalini'). The seeker recognizes the Divine in every part of the body, and experiences vivid impressions of light, sound and taste. When the force/energy moves through the nervous system, a peerless peace wells out, and the external world is kept in abeyance. Prāṇalingi sees ones own Self permeating the whole universe.

**Śaraṇasthala:** The seeker continues to perform deep and intense meditation, and as a result experiences pure delight. Intermittent flashes, and streams of sensations and experiences of the Prāṇalingisthala, are replaced by the Self seeing its own form shining in Divine splendor. There is a serene mood where remembrance of work-a-day-world is gone, illusion of will is burnt, awareness of the body is forgotten, and all external phenomena have crumbled. There is no motion of any kind, the mind is stilled, and the individual consciousness is overcome. The empirical knowledge resolves into supra-mental knowledge, and the sense of duality is replaced by the knowledge of significance of the Union. The seeker experiences pure delight.

**Aikyasthala:** Intense and focused meditation continues. Individual consciousness is completely replaced with the state of Unitive Consciousness where there is no volition, no motion, no sound, no word or speech, and where all consciousness of time and space is suspended. There is no individual consciousness. In this Supra-Consciousness state, the One has reached true Reality – it is indescribable and the great white light is everywhere. Oneness has been attained. When the meditation is not focused on any object, meaning that the focus is only on the inner Self, one attains Nirvikalpa Samādhi, where the super-conscious state is completely devoid of any psychic residue or mental deposits. This supreme state is not conscious of anything. Prabhudēva advocates the attainment of this Nirvikalpa Samādhi. To attain it, one has to focus the mind, breath, reason, knowledge and thought on one point, and remain in that will-less condition, in a state of consubstantial union, until realizing *Niśśūnya* – Void of Voids. When the meditative focus has some sort of an object in it, somewhat of a lower type of Samādhi called Savikalpa Samādhi, where there is some retention of self-volition when absorbed into the super conscious state, is attained. Prabhudēva's *vaċana*, below, enumerates the six characteristics of an Aikya, the one who has transcended.

He who having known Reality, is past care;  
 The Hero, vanquisher of Death;  
 The Glorious, embodiment of the Most High;  
 The Blessed, who has attained the Bliss;  
 The Perfect, who inhabits the Void;  
 The Incarnation, Self-begot,  
 Who has attained the perfect poise,  
 Guhēśvara.

After Aikyasthala there is final consummation. This state, where one revitalizes the society, is referred to as **Jaṅgamasthala**. A Jaṅgama moves for the redemption of mankind, and seeks not for ordinary alms but for unreserved surrender. Attainment of Oneness is the essence of Viraśaivism. It can be attained during one's own life, and it is not an attainment to be had after death. It is not a monopoly of a chosen few; it is within reach of anyone and everyone.

## Summary of the Evolution of Viraśaiva Concepts

Present form of Viraśaiva philosophy and practice is from the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE, as has been composed and presented in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Śūnyasāmpādane which serves as the main scripture of the Viraśaivas. There is a long prehistory of evolution of the Viraśaiva concepts. This prehistory goes as far back as the Ṛgvēdic period. The beginning of this Ṛgvēdic period is believed to be 10,000 BCE. The Ṛgvēda period had been well established during that period prior to 3,100 BCE.

The Vēdas proclaim that Brahman is the goal, and Dharma is the means to attain Brahman. Furthermore, the goal ever remains the same, but the means to attain it is subject to change according to time, place, and person. The goal to attain Brahman or Śūnya or Liṅga has remained the same; the means to attain it has changed or has been modified over the years. Most of the important Viraśaiva concepts have been taken from the Ṛgvēda, the Yajurveda, and both the major and the minor category of the Upaniṣads. Many concepts have remained the same, but many more have been modified into the present day form. Some of the concepts taken from the Vēdic scriptures are as follows.

One God Argument in Ṛgvēda: 'To what is One, sages give many a name' is the same as '*dēvanobba nāma halavu*' meaning 'one God many names' of the Viraśaivas.

Rudra as this one God: Rudra is portrayed in Ṛgvēda as the aggregate of all the Divinities that are worshipped thereof. Ṛgvēda uses the term Śiva many times to describe different Divinities including Rudra so that the meaning of 'Śiva' is brought out clearly.

Viraśaiva concept of the Creator: 'God' as the creator of the universe is given in the Viśvakarmasūkta of Ṛgvēda. 'God' is described as omniscient and omnipotent. Seekers of God are induced to contemplate/meditate.

The Viraśaiva concept of everything is One only: everything that is projected out of God (created) is still within God and that everything is still one, is given in the Puruṣasūkta of Ṛgvēda.

The Viraśaiva concept of Praḷaya/dissolution of the created universe gives rise to the concept of re-absorption into God in the reverse order of creation.

Creation: Nāsadiyasūkta of Ṛgvēda gives the details of creation as accepted by the Viraśaivas. 'In the beginning there was not the non-existent, nor the existent' is the same as 'In the beginning there was nothing, not even Śūnya (Void) or Niśśūnya (Primal Void)'. The concept of Power/Śakti as in 'breathed by its own nature (power)' and the concept of 'desire' are part of the Viraśaiva philosophy of creation.

Liṅga and Liṅgadīkṣa: Ṛgvēdic mantra IX.83.1 is as follows. 'God' pervades all the devotees as Liṅga. Liṅga is sacred, pure and expansive. The body of the ignorant not purified by the process of dīkṣa/initiation does not get It. Only those who are processed and possess the knowledge, and who resort to that Liṅga, attain the Liṅga. Please note that the term 'Liṅga' does not appear in the original Ṛgvēdic mantra.

Then in Yajurvēda, the following concepts of Vīraśaivas are affirmed. Rudra becomes Śiva, and is addressed as the Supreme Being. There is this pañcākṣari/five-syllable mantra 'Namaḥ Śivāya' in the IV.5.8.11 mantra.

Two of the most important principles of Vīraśaivas are 'dignity of labor' and 'equality among all irrespective of caste, creed, gender and such'. These two principles are exemplified in the Yajurvēda.

The saying in Yajurvēda 'May everything in this world be offered to God as worship, and May it be granted to me also' gives rise to the concept of 'Prasāda' of the Vīraśaivas where everything is offered as prasāda with a sense of self-dedication and self-surrender, and without any type of attachment.

The term 'Ṣaṭsthala' and the concept of what Ṣaṭsthala means, do not appear in the Upaniṣads, but the Ṣaṭsthala philosophy is derived from the Upaniṣads.

The Vēdas and the archaeological findings concur that the development of Vīraśaiva concepts and practices occurred during the Vēdic period. However the term 'Vīraśaiva' does not appear during this period. It has been recognized that Pāśupatas, who carried portable miniature Liṅgas with them, were present then. The Vaidika Pāśupatas who practiced Vēdic concepts, not the Avaidika Pāśupatas who did not, have been considered to be the Vīraśaivas of the Vēdic period.

Bhagavad-Gītā is the essence of what is in the Upaniṣads; therefore, Bhagavad-Gītā is a good referral source for the Vīraśaiva concepts.

It is said that the practice of Vīraśaivism which had been tarnished by the six philosophical systems or Dharśanas, and the six creeds or the six doctrines of the Tantra philosophy, were restored in the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE by Basavaṅṅa, implying that the Vīraśaiva concepts existed before, and that they were modified in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Some parts of the Śivāgamas known as the Uttarāgamas lend some of their concepts to the philosophy of the Vīraśaivas. The terms Vīraśaiva, Pañcācāra, Aṣṭāvaraṅga, and Ṣaṭsthala, are explained in these Śivāgamas. The concepts of these have been modified in the 12<sup>th</sup> century because the original ones were somewhat ritualistic, and were not acceptable to the Vīraśaivas of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The philosophy and practices of the Vīraśaivas have been reformed and reiterated in a

modified form in the vaĉanas of the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century CE, these 'Śivādvaita' vaĉanas have been compiled into the form of the main scripture of the Viraśaivas known as 'Śūnya Saṃpādane'.

Śūnya Saṃpādane gives this list of statements in its concluding remarks:

This is the best guide, the philosophical system of exalted Viraśaiva doctrine.

This is that which expounds and firmly establishes the Viraśaiva practice.

This is the crest-jewel of the divine Vēdānta.

This is the chief mirror of all the sciences.

This is the teaching of the highest Experience to promote the Supreme Knowledge.

This is a catalogue of those who, endowed with all kinds of religious practice, have attained the Height.

This is a treasury of the attainment of the great Rājayōga.

This is a happy feast of the ambrosial essence of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, eternal and perfect.

This is a great conference of Prabhudēva on the attainment of Śūnya – an instrument to remove ignorance.

This concluding remark is a profound statement. It has a great impact on the philosophy and practice of the Viraśaivas.

**Ōm**